

# THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1878.

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## POMEROY ABBEY.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

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### CHAPTER XVI.

#### GUY'S CHILD.

ONCE more, as in the days gone by, Pomeroy Abbey was raising its proud head aloft, conscious of the presence of its lord. Leolin had come down to see that things should be in suitable readiness for his bride. Six years now, and no lord had been there.

Since the death of Guy, his widow had lived in that part of the abbey which stood between the gateway and the tower. Leolin, wishing to show courtesy to her as his brother's widow (though he never would be able to show her cordiality), decided to leave her in it undisturbed. He would reside in the other part of the front portion, and in the north wing, which adjoined it. How Mrs. Pomeroy would like to be deposed from her state and authority as Lady of Pomeroy—for no other had supplanted her—was another question. She lived a retired life. Stories had gone about to her prejudice at the time of Guy's death, but time had softened down the feeling against her, and formal visits were paid her. The ardent longing for personal homage and for gaiety, which had been amid her besetting sins, seemed entirely to have left her. That fatal night had turned the current of her life. She was now reserved, cold, proud, and had become, as the French happily term it, a *dévôte*. Yet how young she was still!—wanting yet some few years of thirty.

Mrs. Pomeroy had not been entirely without suitors during these six years. Perhaps we ought to say would-be suitors, for only one had ventured to bring matters to a climax. That was Mr. Knox, of the Knoll: a man of good property, and a relative of old Mrs. Knox

who knew the Essingtons. Whether it was Alice Pomeroy's fortune, or her beauty, or her position, that made the attraction, certain it was that several men desired to marry her. Mr. Knox was the first to try his fate ; and he received his answer—an answer which surprised him. Had he presented himself to Mrs. Pomeroy with a proposition to poison her, he could not have been met with greater indignation. She looked ready to strike him—"and, egad, I thought she'd have done it," he said, when telling the tale to a friend later. Mrs. Pomeroy ordered him out of the abbey and the doors to be closed against him, after telling him that his proposal was an insult and himself a madman for making it, and asking him, with an intensity of scorn that has rarely been heard in the human voice, whether he supposed she would marry *him* after having been the wife of the Lord of Pomeroy. The report of this got wind somehow ; it served to deter other aspirants, and Mrs. Pomeroy was left unmolested.

In the business room below, which had shelves and account books and tin boxes and desks in it, and which adjoined another and larger business room that was called the audience chamber, sat the new Lord of Pomeroy, and Gaunt, the ex-gentleman-keeper. For Gaunt was not the keeper now. He had given that post up when he took upon himself the control of the property in compliance with the wishes of the late lord, George.

John Gaunt, looking noble as ever, but sadly worn and thin, sat before the large desk, which he always used. It was in fact the lord's desk—when any reigning lord chose to meddle with his own affairs and keep his own accounts. Leolin had drawn a chair near. They were going over the receipts and expenditure of the last six years ; the years that had elapsed since Guy died and George succeeded. Leolin, lord now, thought he had a right to inquire into these items ; and Gaunt, courteous ever, afforded him all the information he asked for.

"How well the estate has righted itself," observed Leolin in grateful admiration. "You have been an excellent manager."

"I have done my best," replied Gaunt.

"And were all the revenues, except the portion paid to Mrs. Pomeroy, transmitted to my brother George ?"

"Yes. All."

"You transmitted them yourself ?"

"No: I have paid them over to Mr. Hildyard. It was he who transmitted them to your brother."

"I wonder what George did with the money ?" cried Leolin musingly, leaning back in his chair and thrusting his hands into his coat pockets. "He could not spend it ; it's not likely he could, out there. I hope he has left a will !"

"Oh yes, he is sure to have done that."

"Not at all sure, Gaunt. George was always careless in money matters—thinking of all the world before himself. And his death

was unexpected, remember. If he has not left a will, who—I wonder—would come in for the money ? ”

“ His wife and child,” spoke Gaunt, who seemed just then to have gone into a reverie on his own score.

“ Wife and child ! you are dreaming, Gaunt,” laughed Leolin. “ Were you thinking of poor Guy ? ”

“ Perhaps I was,” said Gaunt, rousing himself, and plunging into the books again.

“ I should have a share, I suppose ; and Joan would, and Isabel ; and—would *she* ? ”

“ Who, sir ? ”

“ Mrs. Pomeroy.”

“ I should fancy not.”

“ I suppose the servants have behaved well, Gaunt ? ”

“ Very well indeed. They have not had too much to do,” added Gaunt, with a smile.

Leolin threw back his head. “ No, indeed ! The whole large lot of them basking in idleness here, just because they were George’s servants, while I had to work like a horse over yonder. It’s fine to be the Lord of Pomeroy ! ”

Gaunt answered nothing. His head was bent over his figures again. In half an hour their task was finished, and Gaunt rose, after locking up the desk.

“ Then, in a week’s time we shall see you here again,” he casually remarked to Leolin : who was returning to London on the morrow.

“ In a week’s time you will see me here again, all being well, and my wife with me. And then,” added Leolin, “ I shall ask you to resign your trusteeship, Gaunt, and give you many thanks for your faithful stewardship. I mean to go in for work myself.”

“ I should wish to keep it on a little longer,” said Gaunt quietly.

“ Why ? ”

“ It may be better that I should.”

“ You are not ready with the accounts, I suppose ? ”

“ Ready at any moment, as far as the accounts go,” replied Gaunt. “ But—I am not quite ready on other scores.”

They stood looking at one another. Gaunt calm, noble, towering in his great height nearly a head above Leolin, who was himself of middle height. Leolin thought Gaunt’s manner rather peculiar ; and he was suddenly struck with his look of sickness.

“ Are you not well, Gaunt ? ”

“ Not very.”

“ You are frightfully thin. Why don’t you speak to Norris ? ”

“ Oh, I don’t think it’s anything serious,” was the careless answer.

“ How do you do this morning, Uncle Leolin ? ” demanded a young lady of some six years old, who came darting into the room. It was Mary Pomeroy, Guy’s child. She was very nice looking with the large grey Pomeroy eyes, and pretty, well-formed features.

Her complexion was of that rather dark (or yellow) tinge that sometimes goes with grey eyes, and the colour on her cheeks was more like vermillion than rose. She carried her little proud head upright, her fair curls falling back on her neck, and walked with the air of a queen.

"Is it you, Mary? Come and give me a kiss."

"I shall not, Uncle Leolin," was the defiant answer.

"No! And why?"

"Because you turned me out of the garden yesterday. You made Bridget take me indoors."

"But it rained. You were getting wet—and you had thin shoes on."

"They were my dancing shoes: I had been taking my lesson. But I'll not kiss you, Uncle Leolin. I like the rain; and I always have my own way when you are not here."

"Do you! Then it is as well that I should be here, Miss Mary."

"Do you know that old Jerome is outside in the corridor? He is waiting to see you."

"Is he?" cried Leolin quickly. "Tell him to come in, there's a little fairy."

"You may tell him yourself, Uncle Leolin. If you are not good to me, I shall not be good to you."

Anything more sturdily commanding than the air of this little lady, as she stood, still and resolute, the reader never saw. She had inherited the stern, indomitable spirit of her father, and she had been the indulged plaything of the abbey—in fact, its little mistress—so that all the obstinate will of the spirit had been fostered, not repressed. A daring child was Mary Pomeroy, and she had one of those remarkably sensible, knowing, precocious minds that are sometimes looked upon with awe. She would say things more suitable for a girl of sixteen than one of six. Leolin laughed; and Gaunt, who was departing, sent in Jerome.

"How is it you have not been to see me before, Jerome?" asked Leolin, shaking hands with the old man. "I have been here these three days."

Jerome made some trifling excuse. 'Twas only yesterday he heard that Mr. Leolin had arrived.

"Well, I went to the Keep yesterday to see you, Jerome, as you did not come to see me, and I could not get in," said Leolin. "I rang three or four times at that tinkling old bell of yours, which must have been cast in the year One. You must be fine and lonely in that silent Keep, Jerome! Will you come back to the abbey?"

"Many thanks, Mr. Leolin, but I couldn't return," said the old man, with almost trembling eagerness. "I'm used to my Keep now, sir, and I could not leave it again."

"As you will. Look here, Jerome—is Gaunt a little touched?"

"A little what, sir?"



"Touched in the head," explained Leolin, tapping his forehead. Jerome looked surprised.

"Why, Mr. Leolin, he has got one of the strongest of heads, Gaunt has."

"His manner was certainly queer this morning, and he looks very ill. When I told him I should take the accounts into my own hands, thanking him for his faithful stewardship, he intimated that he could not give them up. The accounts were ready, he said, but he was not."

"Anything that Gaunt says, he must have his good reasons for; be sure of that, Mr. Leolin."

"I like Gaunt," struck in Mary Pomeroy, in her defiant tone, as if it behoved her to take up his championship. "He is kinder than you, Uncle Leolin. When I was little he made me a present of a beautiful grey donkey, and taught me to ride."

Leolin laughed as he took the young lady's hand. "I am going to pay a visit to your mother: will you conduct me," said he playfully. And Miss Mary was pleased to do it, and walked up the grand staircase full of importance. She liked patronage of all kinds.

Mrs. Pomeroy was seated in the sombre oak chamber, which faced the quadrangle. Handsome though its carved paneling was, it looked dull and dark. Only herself could know what her feelings were, as she gazed on that fatal west tower that faced her, what her repentance was for the foolish part she had played.

Some fine work of silken embroidery was in her hand, which she put down as Leolin entered. She wore rich black silk; on her bright hair black lace rested and fell behind, somewhat after the fashion of the lace veil worn by a Spanish woman. It was Mrs. Pomeroy's usual custom to wear this now. Her mother sometimes scolded her for making herself "into an old woman," but she adhered to it.

How thin she was!—thin, and worn, and anxious looking! but her face retained its old beauty, and a soft bright colour flushed her cheeks as she rose to greet the Lord of Pomeroy. Leolin had paid her one formal visit on his arrival; he was now paying her a second, preparatory to his departure.

"I must thank you for allowing me to retain these rooms," she said—and there was a harshness in her tones, as there always had been, which grated on the refined ear of Leolin, who liked a low sweet voice, that "most excellent thing in woman." "I believe that I ought, according to former custom, to have removed into the south wing: but I have grown to love these rooms, and should have been sorry to quit them. I thank you, Lord of Pomeroy, for your courtesy."

"I am pleased that you should retain them: I should not think of wishing you to quit them," spoke Leolin in his natural good feeling. He did not like Mrs. Pomeroy: but she was his brother's widow, and he accorded to her personal deference.

"And I hope," he continued, "that you and my wife, Lady Anna, will be good friends. I am sure you will like her."

"I shall be glad to make Lady Anna's acquaintance," replied Mrs. Pomeroy coldly. And she took up her work again.

Conversation flagged. Leolin had to make it; she answered him by monosyllables, apparently without interest. He rose to terminate his visit.

"Oh, I forgot to ask you one thing," she interposed. "Have you heard any further particulars of your brother George's death?"

"No more than we heard at first," he answered—"that poor George died in action. He went forth in the morning bright and well and in high spirits; and at night he was lying dead on the battle-field."

"It was very sad," sighed Mrs. Pomeroy.

"His confidential servant, Moore, is on his way home, I believe. He will bring the details, with George's personal effects and papers. We thought Moore would have landed ere this," added Leolin, as he formally shook hands with Mrs. Pomeroy, and quitted the room. Mary was in the corridor with her skipping-rope.

"Did mamma tell you I was naughty, Uncle Leolin?"

"Well—I daresay she might have told me, had I asked her if you were."

"I would not do my lessons this morning. Miss Lorne has the toothache; and mamma wanted to hear them instead, and I ran away. But I don't call that being *very* naughty, Uncle Leolin."

The old abbey of Pomeroy stood out, its walls grey and gloomy in the dim twilight of the August evening. Its windows, however, were in contrast to its walls, many of them being as gay as light could make them, and its retainers bustled about in their preparations, for Leolin, Lord of Pomeroy, was bringing home his bride.

The marriage had taken place in London the previous day. Leolin would fain have reached the abbey the same night; but it was too far, so they made a halt on the road. Now, in the twilight of the second day, they were nearing it; and Lady Anna leaned forward in the carriage to look for the first time upon her future home. The huge pile rose, high and mighty, in front of her.

"What a large place, Leolin!"

"It is, my dearest."

"And there is a real ghost that haunts it, they say."

Leolin laughed. "I fear the ghost has been dead and gone this many a year: however disappointing it may be to your love of romance."

"Which are Mrs. Pomeroy's rooms?"

"Those to the right of the entrance, facing us. The reigning lord has always occupied the whole of the front, but I would not

turn Mrs. Pomeroy out. We shall occupy the rooms on this side the entrance and the north wing which adjoins it."

"It must take an army of servants to keep it up; only this front pile is immense. Will there be two households, Leolin? Our own and Mrs. Pomeroy's?"

"Certainly. We shall have nothing to do with Mrs. Pomeroy, or she with us: she has her own servants and household, and we have ours. You and she need not meet once in a twelvemonth, unless you both please."

"But, Leolin, I think it will be delightful to meet: I am glad she is there. What sort of a person is she? Young?"

"Seven or eight and twenty, I fancy, and beautiful yet. I have only known her lately, have seen her but three times in all; but she strikes me as being the very saddest being I ever came across—proud, reserved, and sorrowful; and they say that formerly, previous to that shocking catastrophe, she was all life and merriment. She moves about with a softened footstep, sees little, if any, society, and seems to take no interest in life, scarcely even in her child, though I believe she is passionately fond of her."

Anna leaned closer to her husband in the twilight. "Leolin, she could not have been really false to her husband!"

"Hush, my darling," he whispered, a haughty flush rising to his face. "To believe the wife of a Pomeroy capable of that would be a brand upon the name for ever. No, no: only to meet another without Guy's knowledge, although it was a brother, was enough of wrong upon him; and Guy must have felt it keenly. A Pomeroy has always been, in regard to his wife, *sans peur et sans reproche*."

The carriage rolled in at the large gateway, and drew up at the entrance—that on the right hand. The servants stood within the hall on either side, bowing to their lord and their new lady. Old Jerome had come from the Keep to take his place at their head. Lady Anna spoke a few timid words to them: but there was true kindness in her tone, a sweet gentleness in her face and manner: and the servants knew at once that their future mistress was one to be loved.

Lady Anna was pleased with all she saw. The rooms were so numerous it would take her a week to know her way about them, she laughingly said. Some of them had been decorated for her, under John Gaunt's superintendence; modernised, he called it; and were of almost regal splendour; but the greater portion remained quaint, sombre, and ancient.

"Do you think you shall be happy?" whispered Leolin, as he went to her dressing-room to take her away for dinner. "Do you regret St. Ives?"

Regret! Happy! A husband she loved, and this princely home, compared with what might have been—the simple Duke of St. Ives

and his domineering mother!—she clasped her hands as she dwelt on the suggested contrast. “Oh, Leolin, my dearest, I am glad to be your wife!”

In the morning Leolin showed her over their own portion of the abbey, telling her this and that of the past history of the Pomeroy. Anna was deeply interested in all she heard, and especially in the tale of the nun’s picture and the prediction. That inveterate gossip, old Mrs. Knox, had given Anna her version of it in London, but she heard the truth now. Leolin, at least, was not superstitious; contact with the world had rubbed childish impressions out of him; but Anna had rather a love of the marvellous.

The afternoon was passing when they strolled into the garden—the large enclosure of land stretching out at the north side of the abbey. Gaunt had taken care that it should be well kept up.

“I could lose myself here as well as in the abbey, Leolin. What lovely sheltering trees!—what beautiful flowers!—what winding walks and shady dells! But—Leolin!—who are they?”

Leolin followed the direction of her eyes, and saw a lady and child, who had just come into view round the bend by the cascade.

“That is Mrs. Pomeroy, Anna. I will fetch her here and introduce you to one another.”

But Mrs. Pomeroy, the instant she caught sight of them, had turned sharply away towards the shrubbery; which would take her to the egress gate; catching up the child’s hand as she went. Miss Mary drew her hand away again and set off to run to Leolin.

“Mary, stay here,” quickly exclaimed Mrs. Pomeroy.

“It is Uncle Leolin, mamma. I am going to him.”

“But I tell you to stay here.”

“And I tell you I must go to him,” replied Miss Mary, exercising as usual her own indomitable will. And she continued her way to Leolin in defiance of her mother.

“Have you come back to the abbey, Uncle Leolin?”

“Yes,” answered he, stooping to kiss her. “Go and speak to that lady, Mary.”

“Who is she?” returned the child.

“She is the Lady of Pomeroy.”

Walking forward quickly, he overtook Mrs. Pomeroy. She coldly shook him by the hand.

“My wife is there, Mrs. Pomeroy. Will you come now, and be introduced to her?”

“Would it be agreeable?”

“Oh, yes; she wishes to make your acquaintance. We got home last night; as I daresay you heard.”

Meanwhile Mary had drawn towards Lady Anna, with a slow but fearless step, her grey eyes—the keen Pomeroy eyes—scanning her closely. Anna held out her hand that she might come quicker; but

the child, instead of responding to the implied welcome, halted at a few yards' distance.

"What's your name?" boldly inquired she, with all the haughtiness of a Pomeroy.

"Lady Anna."

"My Uncle Leolin says you are the Lady of Pomeroy."

"I believe I am," smiled Anna.

"You are not. Mamma is the Lady of Pomeroy. Why do you tell a story?"

Anna felt amused. "We will not dispute about it, my dear. Tell me your name."

"Mary Alice Joan Pomeroy. My papa was Guy, Lord of Pomeroy. Uncle Leolin's the lord now."

"Yes, I know he is."

"And mamma's the lady," she repeated, greatly defiant. "Were you ever at the abbey before?"

"No."

"That's the east tower, and that's the north tower," said the child, doing the honours gravely of her paternal home. "And that queer place, over yonder, is the Keep. Jerome lives in it."

Anna looked in the direction of the Keep, and saw a round structure of grey stone, covered with moss like the abbey, a small narrow window being discernible here and there.

"Who is Jerome?" asked she. "Stay—I remember I saw him last night."

"Jerome was the confidential attendant on the Lords of Pomeroy. Do you know what that means?"

"Yes," laughed Anna.

"He was my grandpapa's attendant: and when grandpapa died, he became papa's; and when papa died, he would not stay in the abbey any longer, but went to the Keep. I was a baby then, but Bridget tells me about it. I go to see Jerome sometimes."

"The Keep belongs to the abbey then; to the Lords of Pomeroy?" continued Anna, thinking her a singularly intelligent child for her age.

"It belongs to them of course. It was my Uncle George's while he lived, and now it is Uncle Leolin's. Did you know that Uncle George never came home, though he was the lord?"

"I have heard so."

"But the Keep is Jerome's to live in for his life: the old lord gave it him when he was dying. That was my grandpapa: we call him the old lord."

"Who has made you wise, and told you all this?"

"They all tell me. Bridget tells me, and Jerome tells me, and Aunt Joan tells me when she comes here, and Mr. Gaunt tells me. Gaunt used to be the gentleman-gamekeeper. The men under him were the real keepers, you know, though Gaunt was called so; but

Gaunt was really a gentleman, and traces his descent back, as we do. I hear nothing but tales of the Pomeroyes. We are descended from kings, we Pomeroyes, so there are many things to tell of us; we are not like common people. You should hear old Naomi Rex talk about us. She is Bridget's aunt, and, she lives in the forest—and when I rode up there on my pretty donkey that Gaunt gave me, she used to come out and feed it with stuff from her garden. You don't know how angry I used to make Bridget, because I would gallop the donkey, and Bridget could not run fast enough to keep up with me. That was when I was little. I have a pony now."

"And does Bridget still run beside you?"

"No: we borrow Jeffs."

"Borrow Jeffs!"

"Jeffs is the lord's coachman, not mamma's; ours is Croft; but mamma likes best to trust me to Jeffs because he is old and steady. Jeffs rides one of the old horses that won't go faster than my pony. I asked Jeffs at first why he would not be mamma's coachman, and he said he should have been hers, only I was a girl and not a boy. We go up to old Naomi's, and she tells me tales of the Pomeroyes—how great and good they were. Mamma will not let me repeat the tales to her, she says she has heard too much of them: but then, you see, mamma is not a true Pomeroy."

"You are a strange child!" involuntarily exclaimed Lady Anna.

"That's because I am a Pomeroy," returned the young lady. "If I want to make mamma angry, I tell her that I am a Pomeroy and she's not. She beat me once for saying it and banished me to the nursery for two days. I did not care: I have the Pomeroy spirit."

"How *can* they have brought the child up like this?" thought Anna, feeling quite dismayed. "And I am sure she would be a sweet child, properly trained."

Leolin came up with Mrs. Pomeroy, as the thought passed through her mind, and introduced them to each other.

"Mrs. Pomeroy," he briefly said. "And this," he added, "is my wife, Lady Anna."

Anna blushed and put out her hand in cordiality—as it was right to do between connections so near. Mrs. Pomeroy wore the same attire that we last saw her in: the rich black silk, made tight to the throat; the black lace mantilla (it looked like it) on her head. Anna was in a light gleaming silk; her fair, bright hair, worn without ornament, shining in the sunlight every time she moved her parasol. It was a very hot day, and neither of them had put on a bonnet. They were quite a contrast: the one looking so gay and bright; the other dark and sombre: even her parasol was black.

Anna, blushing, had put out her hand, her sweet face wearing almost an imploring look, hoping for an answering welcome. To this sensitive-minded girl, the coming to Pomeroy Abbey to supplant



Mrs. Pomeroy had seemed a formidable thing; one she shrank from; and she yearned for a few words of reassuring sympathy. But Mrs. Pomeroy curtsied distantly, and would not meet the hand; would not appear to see it. The child had just spoken of the Pomeroy spirit: one of the Pomeroy frowns rose to the face of the lord.

They stood in unpleasant silence, resulting from Mrs. Pomeroy's marked discourtesy. Therefore, when a dusty travelling-carriage, drawn by four post-horses, was seen to come in view, as it did at the same moment, the diversion it caused served to soften the awkward feeling. From the part of the garden where they stood, the approach to the abbey was visible; and this travelling-carriage, its blinds down, had turned off the high road and was sweeping up it. A man-servant sat on the box, and a very large coat-of-arms was emblazoned on the panels. The eyes of Mary were quick; she was the first to speak.

"The Pomeroy arms! Why, it must be Aunt Joan!"

But the eyes of Leolin had expanded with amazement as he gazed. They were the arms of the *Lords* of Pomeroy, and no living man, but himself, had a right to use them; certainly no living woman, save his wife, *as* his wife. The full arms, with their quarterings, their supporters, and all the rest of the adjuncts, now conspicuous on that travelling-carriage, belonged to the lord alone: the arms used by the other branches of the family were more simple. Mrs. Pomeroy strained her gaze upon the arms, and her face became white as death. She had ceased to use the arms when Guy died: but had her child been a boy instead of a girl, she would have had the right to use them as the young lord's mother.

"It can never be Rupert!" burst from the compressed lips of Leolin, his thoughts flying to the one who ought to have been lord, and was not. "To appear amongst us again, would be to dare his fate—and we could not save him from it."

Anna stole her hand within her husband's. The name of Rupert brought all sorts of dread to her mind. "What would it be—his fate?"

"Death," Leolin mechanically answered—"death by the public verdict. But what idle dream is coming over me?" broke off the lord, wiping his face: "it cannot be Rupert."

Mary Pomeroy laid tight hold of her uncle. "Look at mamma," she said, in a frightened whisper.

He turned, as did his wife; and they hastened to hold Mrs. Pomeroy. Her hands had dropped, her features were drawn and ghastly. The mention of Rupert had frightened her to agony: was he in truth coming home to brave his fate? No one in the world would dare to use those arms, save Rupert.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## STARTLING VISITORS.

THE carriage, that was causing so much painful speculation, drove in at the large archway and stopped. A lady in deep mourning—a tall, handsome, right regal-looking woman—descended from it, followed by a female attendant and a sick child, a boy of some seven or eight years old. She inquired for Mrs. Pomeroy, and was ushered up the grand staircase. The lord walked forward to hear the message brought to Mrs. Pomeroy, and felt greatly relieved. Only a lady! But where on earth had she picked up that carriage?

Alice proceeded to her reception-rooms. She saw the child lying on a couch, the attendant near him. The lady rose at the entrance of Mrs. Pomeroy, threw back her crape veil, and they stood face to face.

"Do you know me?" the stranger inquired.

Remembrance was dawning over Mrs. Pomeroy. Surely it was Sybilla Gaunt, the daughter of Gaunt the gentleman-keeper, she who had left the village nearly eight years before, and with whose good name rumour had made free. There was no mistaking her; those nobly beautiful features, once seen, could not be forgotten.

"You are Sybilla Gaunt!"

"I was Sybilla Gaunt, years ago. I am Sybilla Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy froze at once. "What may be the purport of your visit?" she coldly asked.

"I requested to see you privately, as in courtesy bound: and to explain to you why I must from henceforth assume my rights: however sorry I shall be," she added with a bow, "to displace the Lady of Pomeroy."

"I am not the Lady of Pomeroy," sharply interrupted Alice.

"Not in point of fact; I am aware of that: but you have held sway here as such."

"I do not hold it now," interposed Alice, her voice sounding harsher than usual. "It is not I who am Lady of Pomeroy."

"Then who is?—if you will allow me to ask."

"The lord's wife."

"The lord! Of whom do you speak?"

"Of whom should I speak but Leolin?" was the retort. "Leolin is the Lord of Pomeroy."

"Leolin! Surely it is not possible that Leolin has assumed ——"

Alice Pomeroy would not allow her to go on. Once more came her harsh voice in interruption. Persons who have not been particularly white themselves generally assume, where they can, to regard others as of the blackest: and very black indeed did Mrs. Pomeroy consider Sybilla Gaunt to be. This was the source of her discourtesy.

"Leolin is the Lord of Pomeroy by right. He has no need to assume to be."

The visitor approached the sofa; and, taking her child by the hand, whispered to him: "Rupert dear, can you walk a few steps? Yes, I think you can: I want you to see this lady."

She lovingly lifted him down, and led him up to Mrs. Pomeroy. He was a graceful, aristocratic child, though now fearfully pale and thin: his features were beautiful, he had his mother's expressive violet eyes, with the long dark lashes; but there was no mistaking that his sire had been a Pomeroy. The visitor held him before her.

"This child," she said, "is the Lord of Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy, taken by surprise, could neither assent nor refute; but a sudden thought prompted her to speak. "Is it well," haughtily pointing to the servant, "that family discussions should be carried on before a menial?"

"She does not understand a word: she is French. Mrs. Pomeroy, Leolin is not lord, and never has been. The moment the breath went out of my husband's body, his son, this child, became Lord of Pomeroy."

"It is easy to assert a thing," scornfully laughed Mrs. Pomeroy. "George Pomeroy may have made you a tardy reparation—I know not: you will doubtless say so—but this child is seven years old, if he is a day."

"You may have heard of the Gaunt blood," spoke Sybilla calmly; "my father would tell you that it is not less pure than fiery. Can you look at me, and believe that I have ever disgraced it?"

"You left the village to follow George Pomeroy."

"Yes: but many months before that I had become George Pomeroy's wife. We were married here. Here, in the chapel attached to the abbey."

"Can this be true?" murmured Mrs. Pomeroy.

"I will not reiterate the assertion," was the proud retort. "It will be easy of proof as your own marriage."

"It was performed in secret?"

"It had to be performed in secret, for good reasons of my husband's. It was known to none, save the priest who married us, good Father Andrew, and to Rupert."

"Oh! Known to Rupert?"

Disbelief, almost bordering upon scorn, pervaded the tone of the last words. Sybilla quietly corrected it.

"Certainly to Rupert. He was present at the marriage. Later, when George came over to the old lord's funeral, he disclosed the truth to my father and to Guy; and he made all necessary arrangements for my quitting Abbeyland, but I wished to remain in it as long as I could for my father's sake. When I did go, Rupert took me as far as Holyhead, and George received me on the other side. A little later, my boy was born."

"In Ireland?"

"In Ireland. George was quartered there. He afterwards started

for India with the regiment. I followed him thither when I was strong enough, taking my child and its nurse. The Indian climate did not agree with the child, and he has not been very strong," she added, glancing fondly at Rupert, who had returned to the distant sofa. "He is nearly eight years old now."

"He is veritably and truly the Lord of Pomeroy?" uttered Mrs. Pomeroy, unable to take in the fact, though she no longer doubted the truth of the story.

"He is as truly the Lord of Pomeroy as anyone can be, save—save—him who is yet a fugitive. *He* is the veritable Lord of Pomeroy, and will be to his life's end, although he is debarred from enjoying his rights as such."

"I think he must be dead," whispered Mrs. Pomeroy, with quivering lips.

"No, he is not dead," Sybilla was beginning. But she broke off suddenly, her tone changing to coldness. "Let the subject, if you please, be a barred one between us. It is one that you may not care to dwell upon; and I will not."

Alice Pomeroy's face deepened to crimson: the next minute it was left paler than before. Her lips trembled.

"I see. You have no more pity for me than others. You have judged me harshly as they have. No one stood by me in my bitter trial. In common humanity you must finish the sentence you began. Is he alive?"

"Yes. At least, he was a short while ago. My husband used to hold communication with him now and then."

"From himself! By letter! He may be coming back here," added Mrs. Pomeroy in agitation. "He may, not understanding his danger, be wishing to endeavour to assume his rights as Lord of Pomeroy!"

"He will never do that," replied Sybilla, her voice inexpressibly sad. "He recognised George as the fitting lord, under the circumstances, and this child as his heir."

That Sybilla in her heart condoned the unhappy Rupert's sins, there could be little room to doubt. Mrs. Pomeroy began to shiver. She often did when the past was brought unexpectedly before her: and she did not at all forgive Sybilla for bringing it.

"With what object have you returned here?" she resumed pettishly.

"Need you ask—now that you know who I am?" returned Sybilla with quiet dignity. "To bring up my child in the home of his inheritance; and to reside in it of my own right. I am the Lady of Pomeroy."

Mrs. Pomeroy mused. "How will Leolin receive this?—and his wife, Lady Anna? They were married but two days ago. He introduced her to me just now as the 'Lady of Pomeroy.'"

"I cannot understand it. Notice was sent to Mr. Hildyard that

George left a son—who had of course become Lord of Pomeroy. And my father knew it all along. How they can have suffered poor Leolin to assume the inheritance is inexplicable."

"Why did you not come over at once?"

"I came as soon as I could come; as soon as little Rupert's health allowed it. George's own man attended us, bringing his papers and effects. We came by the overland route. In Paris Rupert was again taken ill, and that detained us. But I saw no cause for any particular haste, knowing of the instructions sent to Mr. Hildyard," concluded Sybilla.

"It will be a blow for Leolin." And Mrs. Pomeroy half laughed as she said it—just as though she enjoyed the blow.

"I am very, very sorry to inflict it—but I have no choice. I would not willingly have come to sow discord: if Leolin will be reasonable, I will be. They may have the grandeur and the sway still, in all but what concerns my boy."

"Had you any other children?"

"Three," she sighed. "They died in India."

"I know who this one is like," said Mrs. Pomeroy—"like him he is named after. Oh, why did you name him Rupert?" she continued, in a wailing tone of pain.

"We liked the name: and George was always fond of his brother Rupert. Rupert joined us in Ireland, and was at the child's christening. But I must see Leolin."

Mrs. Pomeroy sent a messenger to request Leolin's presence. Strange, perhaps, to say, this astounding news was not unwelcome to her, now she came to revolve it. She disliked Leolin: he had not been sparing of his scorn of herself and her deeds when he came over at Guy's death, and some good-natured listener had repeated the words. She had never forgiven Leolin. It would not be too much to say that she hated him: and she would far rather it was Sybilla to reign than he.

Leolin, still lingering in the garden with his wife, came up in answer to Mrs. Pomeroy's message, unconscious of the trouble that awaited him. It chanced that the French maid was leading the little boy from the room as he approached it, and they met in the corridor. His notice fell on the child; so sickly-looking, so handsome, so like—it struck Leolin at once—his brother Rupert. Ay, and like George, also.

"Why, who are you?" he exclaimed, stopping before them: and the child lifted his large dark blue eyes and answered courteously.

"I am the Lord of Pomeroy."

Leolin laughed slightly. "Poor child! who has been playing a farce upon you? Who is this boy?" he repeated to the attendant.

"Plait-il, monsieur?"

Leolin changed his language to hers, which he spoke as a native; as did all the Pomeroyes; and repeated the question.

"Monsieur, c'est le Seigneur de Pomeroy."

Turning from them impatiently, he entered the drawing-room, and gazed with amazement at Sybilla, whom he instantly recognised.

"Why, Sybilla! is it you?" he exclaimed. "Have you come back again?"

Mrs. Pomeroy glided up to them. "Leolin, it is the Lady of Pomeroy."

Leolin looked from one to the other with a darkening brow. "The Lady of—what do you say?"

But it was the lady herself—for so we must henceforth call her—who interposed. "Leolin, I am indeed the Lady of Pomeroy; and have been, ever since the fatal night that deprived the abbey of Guy. It was George, you know, to succeed him: Rupert could not."

"Well?" quoth Leolin, wonderingly.

"Well—I was George's wife."

"Wife!" sneered Leolin.

"I was George's wife long before your father died."

"I heard a tale of Sybilla Gaunt's flying from the village with a Pomeroy—after she could no longer stay in it," scoffed Leolin. "But Rupert was indicated as the gallant."

The Lady of Pomeroy confronted him, not giving way to anger, as might have been natural. "I was married to George in the chapel here," she calmly said; "Guy and Rupert became the confidants of the secret, for my husband saw fit to impart it to them; Rupert at the time, Guy later. I did stay here for many months afterwards; and then I joined my husband in Ireland, where the child was born. Rupert came to us there, and stood godfather to the boy."

"It is a forged, got-up ——"

"Stay, Leolin," she interrupted, stopping what was about to follow. "Are the Gaunts capable of falsehood—of imposition? Though my father's patrimony and position have been dwindling down for generations, did you ever know him guilty of a dishonourable word or action? He has yielded obedience to the Lords of Pomeroy, almost as a menial, but he is still the self-conscious descendant of the nobles of the land, and I am his daughter. *You know* that I would tell you nothing but truth. If you please to assume that it is not true, send for Father Andrew to confirm what I say. He married us."

Leolin stood confounded: he had no words of refutation ready.

"I am the Lady of Pomeroy, George's widow," she quietly repeated, "and his child, Rupert, is the lord. I have come back to my fatherland to enter upon my own rights; I have come to the abbey to inhabit it. If I chose to assume my full rights, I should not live in it as the late lord's widow, but as the reigning lady; it can own no other lady than myself, so long as my child, its lord, shall be unmarried. You may perceive that no choice is left me; that for



my child's sake I must do this. But, Leolin, I have said to Mrs. Pomeroy—Where is she?"

The lady turned, and Leolin turned. Mrs. Pomeroy, who was at their side but a moment before, was no longer to be seen. She had silently left the room, though they had not noticed her departure.

"I have not come, Leolin, to stir up a whirlwind. I shall not care to fulfil one part of the Lady of Pomeroy's duties—the receiving guests and the visiting them. I shall require but limited space in the abbey; but—you understand me—I must be its recognised lady: I am content to live in it quietly, unostentatiously, superintending the education and watching the health of my son. Therefore, though you are not, and cannot be, the abbey's lord, I should yet wish that you would live in it at present as the lord's representative. I should wish that you and your wife—whom I hear you have newly wedded—should live in it and do its honours, and enjoy a portion of its revenues, which I will take care that you receive: be, in fact, first and foremost, in all but name. Leolin, you will not guess the feeling that prompts me to say this."

He did not ask her to enlighten him; he stood, as before, with compressed lips.

"I will tell you," she said, sinking her voice to a whisper. "So long as *he* lives, he is the true Lord of Pomeroy. He is, Leolin. Though by one wild action, committed in the heat of passion, he may have forfeited the right to reign, he is the true Lord of Pomeroy; in spite of his being compelled to live in exile, poverty, he is yet the chief of Pomeroy. Nor George, nor our child, nor you, had, or can have, a real title to profit by these advantages while he lives——"

"How can you give utterance to so absurd a theory?" broke out Leolin, with flashing anger.

"I speak as I feel," she quietly said: "I feel that, in spite of what happened, he is the only legitimate chief of Pomeroy. Had it been premeditated murder, then I grant you, exile, death, would be too good for him: but, you know what it was—a quarrel, a scuffle. Thus I feel that not one of us has more right to enjoy these advantages than another: nay, that you, as the last of them left, save him, have perhaps the most. It was this feeling, as much as his disinclination to leave the army on the eve of war, that prevented my husband coming home to establish himself at Pomeroy: he felt that the right was but a false right, while his unhappy brother lived. My child is the ostensible lord, and must be, for we cannot put away the laws of succession: but, Leolin, do you and your wife remain in the abbey, and keep up its splendour and its gaiety."

Still there came no reply from the displaced lord.

"Another thing," she went on, in a changed tone. "A voice seems to whisper me that should I assume my full rights here, it might only be to resign them to you on the death of my child. I

do not think he will live, Leolin : he was never strong in India, and just before his father died he had fever upon fever, and he has never recovered it. Should he die, as I greatly fear he will, then you are again the Lord of Pomeroy."

"I must repeat that your feeling towards Rupert is unjustifiable ; absurdly high-flown.

"It is my feeling," she answered, the blood mantling in her cheeks, "and it was my husband's before me. When he dies, that poor wanderer and exile, why, then I may wish to take rather more upon myself here than I shall now ; I may perhaps require that Mrs. Pomeroy shall resign to me these state apartments, which she has continued to occupy. But there's one thing I shall never do, Leolin—and that is, displace you and your wife."

"The poor exile, as you call him—I should rather say the wicked exile—must be dead long ago."

"He is not dead, Leolin."

"Not dead ! How do you know it ?"

"Because George heard from him just before his own death."

"Where is he ? What is he doing ?" asked Leolin, with eager emotion.

"I cannot tell you where he is ; I do not know. So far as George and I could gather, he moved about from one desert place to another, avoiding those frequented by civilised man. Once he wrote to us from the depths of some unknown prairie in the Pacific ; once from a desert wild in Africa. His whole life is spent in contrivances to hide himself from his fellow men.—It must so be spent unto the end "

Leolin sighed. He and Rupert had been reared together ; they had shared the same chamber in infancy, the same studies in boyhood, the same sports as young men : in spite of what had happened they were still brothers ; and there were moments when Leolin felt for him most deeply.

"We have been thinking him dead," he said. "He has never given us the slightest token that he was not, all these years."

"How could he give it, Leolin ? How did he know but that some of you here, in your anger, might seek to bring him to justice ? He bound George down to secrecy : I hardly know whether I am justified now in speaking."

"Absurd ! We should not be likely to do that."

"You would not. But you cannot answer for Mrs. Pomeroy."

Leolin knitted his brow ; as if the name, and the associations it called up, angered him.

"Where did you get that carriage with the lord's coat-of-arms ?" he abruptly asked, with scant ceremony.

"They are the arms of my child ; and his alone. I halted in Paris, for he had there a renewal of his fever. I bought the carriage in Paris, and had the arms placed on it. Leolin, shall it be peace ?"

"I don't know what it shall be," roughly returned Leolin, as he turned from the room.

How bitter this blow was to him, he alone knew. In Leolin Pomeroy there had always existed a strong element of selfishness. He was ambitious; fond of state, of position, and of power; fond of money: not for the money in itself, but for the good things it brings. To all this he had attained as Lord of Pomeroy: and to have it dashed from him at one fell blow was almost more than human nature could bear. Is it surprising that a strong feeling of resentment against this new Lady of Pomeroy, and against her child—who seemed, both, to have sprung from the other end of the earth or out of the depths of the sea—should have taken possession of him?

In this mood, he chanced to meet Father Andrew. The good priest, jolly and equable as ever, was walking about in the summer sunshine, on the greensward that skirted the approach to the abbey, thinking of nothing in the world but what Marget was providing for his early supper that night, and hoping it would be a dish of beans and bacon, to which choice delicacy he was particularly partial. He had asked for bacon and beans some days ago, and had not had it yet; Marget—the old-fashioned body who did for him, and who had done for the priest before him—liking to exercise her own opinion in matters. During these agreeable anticipations he found himself suddenly pounced upon by Leolin Pomeroy; who had an awful frown on his face, and laid a fierce grasp on his arm.

"That daughter of John Gaunt—Sybilla. Do you mind me, father?"

"Sure enough I do," spoke the father.

"She has come back here with a tale that you married her to my brother George."

"It is a true tale," replied the priest. "I did marry them."

"Did it lie in the line of your duty, Father Andrew, to unite Sybilla Gaunt to a Pomeroy?" demanded Leolin in a severe tone.

Nothing put out the good-humoured priest: severity fell harmless upon him. He opened his snuff-box, and shovelled out a heap of snuff that would hardly have gone into a table-spoon.

"You know what the Pomeroy will is: George Pomeroy, good-hearted and gentle though he was, possessed it equally with the rest of you. He did not say to me, Will you marry me? he said, Do it. The licence, and all else, was in order, and I had no choice but to obey."

"Without the sanction of friends on either side!" was Leolin's scornful reproach. "Without witnesses?"

"Had there been no witness at all, I might have demurred. Not that any end would have been gained by it. George would only have taken her off to the next town and got married there. But there was a witness—his brother Rupert. Rupert was present; and

to judge by his manner, heartily sanctioned it. And so she has got back, has she !”

Leolin looked the scorn he did not speak. “Do you know that there is a child ?—a boy ? She has brought the boy with her, whom she calls the Lord of Pomeroy.”

“I knew there was a boy : born eleven or twelve months after the marriage. Since poor George’s death and your accession, Gaunt and I have sometimes talked over the possible complication——”

“Complication !” wrathfully echoed Leolin. “Was it well, I ask you, father, to conceal so weighty a matter from me ?—to let me believe that George left no child ?”

“Look here,” said the priest, pleasantly. “We knew about the boy, of course ; that he was George’s heir ; but he was always so delicate, and of late so ill, his life hanging by a thread, that we deemed it probable he would not live to trouble you. Upon George’s unlooked-for death, Sybilla wrote just a line to her father ; it was little more than a line, in her distress ; she said that the child was then as ill as he could be, there remained little hope of him ; but that all due instructions should be forwarded to Mr. Hildyard. Well, we thought, naturally thought, that Mr. Hildyard, upon receiving these instructions, would acquaint you at once with the fact that there was a little lad who came in as Lord of Pomeroy. Finding that he did not so acquaint you, but, on the contrary, suffered you to enter on the succession, we supposed Hildyard must have received news that the boy was dead. There it is—lying in a nutshell.”

“Whether he was dead or alive, I ought not to have been kept in this total ignorance. You and Gaunt have both behaved ill to me, father.”

“Nay, nay, my son, not intentionally. In the uncertainty, as to whether the child was alive or dead, we did not care to speak to you ; preferring, rather, to leave it until Sybilla’s return, which has long been expected.”

“As to Gaunt’s conduct throughout the whole business, I cannot find words to express my detestation of it. He has played his cards well ! It is explained now why he hesitated to give up the stewardship.”

“If you mean that he was a party to the marriage, you are mistaken,” said the priest. “Gaunt knew no more of it, or of what was afoot, than you did. Your father knew of it before Gaunt knew.”

“My father !” exclaimed Leolin, staring at the speaker.

“Ay. I told your father of it on his death-bed. It was, I think, the very day he died. We were talking confidentially, he and I, chiefly about you all, and I saw fit to inform him that I had married George some months before to Sybilla Gaunt. The subject was, in fact, led up to.”

"Did my father, dying though he was, explode with passion?"

"Your father sent his blessing to them. With four sons to marry, he said, one of them might as well choose Sybilla, as not. She was a pure, good girl."

"Pure! Good!"

"They were the old lord's words: Sybilla was a pure, good girl; of good descent too; he had always liked her, and she would make George a good wife. George had once told him, it seemed, that he should like to choose Sybilla, and the lord had sanctioned the wish. So George was not guilty of even tacit disobedience, you perceive, though he did not at the time disclose the marriage; in fact, George was about the only one of you who, I am sure, could not be guilty of it."

"My father told you this when he was dying?"

"He did. It was his intention to send for Sybilla that day and personally give her his blessing; but death came on too quickly."

"And, with all this approbation—which sounds as though it came out of a romance—will you tell me why it was needful to continue to make a secret of the marriage?" sarcastically asked Leolin.

"They might have declared it, as it seems to me."

"I will tell you why they did not," returned the priest. "Your brother George had paid rather too much attention to his colonel's daughter, or she to him: George declared it was the latter, and I think it likely; he was a handsome fellow, you know. He found, to his consternation, that she expected him to ask for her in marriage: but he cared a great deal too much for Sybilla to do that. He told me that he had hastened his marriage with Sybilla out of sheer fear that Miss Dillon would get a promise from him in some weak moment, and he should find himself compelled to marry her. That's why he kept his marriage a secret—lest it should reach the colonel's ears—for a man, you see, likes to stand well with his colonel. Miss Dillon went with her father to India, obliging George—as he considered—still to keep the secret: or, at any rate, not to declare it publicly. Most of his brother officers knew it."

"George was always a coward in some things," remarked Leolin.

"In what things was he a coward?" rather warmly asked the priest. "George was as brave and good a fellow as ever bent knee to shrine."

"In the matter of hurting other people's feelings. I've known him walk four miles round, rather than pass the cottage of some ill-doing serf here, whom he had been obliged to blow up. And witness his never coming home, as lord, out of consideration for that miserable wanderer, Rupert."

"Ah," said the priest musingly, a far-off look in his eyes. "But if there were more men like George Pomeroy, the world would be better than it is. I have never known anyone so unselfish."

Leolin turned back to the house. Father Andrew, solacing himself with another liberal portion of snuff, continued his walk, the far-off look of speculation in his genial eyes. Which speculation might either concern the Pomeroy family, or the problematic treat of bacon and beans.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A WARNING TO LEOLIN.

LEOLIN POMEROY shut himself up in his library, there to brood over the startling news that the day had brought him. It was a most unpleasant position to be placed in. Had he been single, he might possibly have felt it less: though to be suddenly cut down from his honour and dignity as Lord of Pomeroy, was a mortification of which he could not yet realise the full bitterness. His mind was in a chaos: he could not tell what course to pursue, or how best to neutralise the blow. Could he deny the marriage—affect to ignore it as a thing that had never had place? No; that might not be easy: any hope of that kind might prove a vain one. But—could he not get it annulled and all its consequences with it? His eye lighted, and his heart warmed within him at the thought: for he knew how great was the influence of the Lords of Pomeroy at the court of the Vatican. And he, as reigning lord—what vain fancy was he revelling in?—this child was the Lord of Pomeroy, himself lord no longer. Leolin Pomeroy, with a sharp word and a groan, bent his head on the table in gloomy discontent.

He knew not how long he remained thus. A gentle hand stole round his neck and aroused him. His wife put up her other hand, and laid her face upon his.

"Leolin, my dearest, why need you care?" she whispered. "I am only thankful that it did not happen before now, or they might have refused me to you."

His face flushed. "Anna—what are you speaking of? what have you heard?"

"I have heard all—that you are not the Lord of Pomeroy, and that this beautiful abbey is not our own home——"

"No," he interrupted. "Enemies are trying to wrest it from us."

"But, Leolin, we may laugh at them: they cannot separate us."

"How did you learn the news?"

"Mrs. Pomeroy came to the garden and told me."

Leolin Pomeroy very nearly swore at Mrs. Pomeroy. "My wife, my wife! it is for your sake that I could curse the tidings."

She kissed away the words, her cheeks blushing, her shy eyes drooping. "Oh, Leolin, my darling, they may take everything from me but you."



He raised her face and made her look at him, made her meet the full bent of his loving gaze. "I am now but Leolin Pomeroy."

"I married Leolin Pomeroy; I married you; Leolin, my husband, my best-beloved!"

"I don't believe they can take it from us," spoke Leolin. "There must be some mistake—some flaw. I am sure of it."

"Flaw in what?" she asked. "In the marriage of this lady who has just come here? Do you mean that, Leolin?"

"I do. And I will take very good care to search it out and prove it."

"Oh, but, Leolin, you will not seek to do anything harsh or wrong," she pleaded. "If this little boy is by right the Lord of Pomeroy, you must not try to displace him. It would not bring happiness to you or to me."

"It would prevent the unhappiness that seems to be threatening us."

"If this little child is what they say he is, your brother George's son, he must be the true Lord of Pomeroy," she urged. "And oh, Leolin, it will be *right* that he should enjoy his own; right in God's sight."

"You don't understand the case, Anna," said Leolin, some annoyance in his tone.

"No, dear, I daresay not; I am not wise. I only understand this much—that the wealth and the grandeur we thought were our own, are not so. But we can be quite as happy in a cottage home as in this great abbey—if you can only think so."

"But I can't think so, Lady of Pomeroy."

"Nay, Leolin, pray do not call me *that*. Yes—I suppose you said it but in jest. Let us be just—*please*—to this little lad and his mother; and generous as well as just. I am quite sure," she added in a shrinking tone, "that as we act by others, so shall we ourselves be acted by in return: that is one of the unalterable decrees of heaven. Papa has ever taught me so."

Leolin broke off the conversation. His wife's ideas upon the matter seemed to him hardly worth refuting. Leolin Pomeroy meant to act; not argue.

Meanwhile he found himself obliged (as a temporary thing) to submit to adverse fate. Upon no plea could he declare that the marriage had been illegal, and for the present this new Lady of Pomeroy must remain at the abbey. Were he to attempt to put her forth, she might call the powers of the law to bear, and Leolin would certainly be worsted.

"And what in the world, Alice, is the truth of this strange report that I hear?" demanded a short, stout ball of a woman, plunging unceremoniously that self-same evening into the drawing-room of Mrs. Pomeroy.

Alice rose and offered her a chair. Mrs. Wyld sank into it—

and it was Mrs. Wylde, though the reader may fail at this first moment to recognise her. For Mrs. Wylde has been growing stouter and stouter all these years, and shorter in proportion, until she now looks like nothing but a round dumpling. And her face gets red, and she seems ever in a flurry: but her attire is not less gay than of yore, and as she sits down now she unties her white satin bonnet-strings, and begins fanning herself with a painted fan that has some real pearls embedded in its handle. At the other end of the room, playing at fox-and-goose on a little ivory board, sat Mary Pomeroy and her governess, Miss Lorne.

"I was at my dinner," resumed Mrs. Wylde, giving no time for her daughter to speak, "Cannet waiting upon me as usual, when he was called out of the room—Whittaker the keeper wanted him about that fence of mine that was damaged. 'Have you heard the news, ma'am?' says Cannet to me, when he came in again; 'there's a report that a new lord has appeared at Abbeyland to displace Mr. Leolin.' Of course I asked the man what he meant, and who the new lord was—thinking Cannet must have been drinking: but he persisted in his tale, and I came off to see. And now what is it, Alice—anything or nothing?"

Alice explained. The new lord was a little fellow of nearly eight years old, George's son. And his mother was Sybilla Gaunt, who had been so much aspersed in the days gone by.

Mrs. Wylde lifted her head with a jerk, causing the white plumes on her bonnet to vibrate. She could be very indignant when she liked; and she was so now. "Sybilla Gaunt!"

So Mrs. Pomeroy explained further. *That* had been all a mistake. Sybilla was—and there could be no doubt about it—the Lady of Pomeroy. She had been George Pomeroy's wife from the first—and some of the Pomeroy's had known it all along, and the old lord had sanctioned it.

Mrs. Wylde could find no words to express her feelings. Fanning herself violently, the feathers shook again. In the midst of the stormy silence, Miss Mary Pomeroy, having lost the game at fox-and-goose, upset the dainty board with a crash and sprang forward.

"What have you come here for so late as this, grandmamma?"

"I came to see your mamma. And I think it high time that little girls should be in bed."

"I am not ready to go to bed yet," said Mary. "Miss Lorne promised me two games at fox-and-goose to-night, and we have only played one. Grandmamma, do you know that Uncle Leolin is no more the Lord of Pomeroy?"

"Only to hear of such a thing exasperates *me*," said Mrs. Wylde.

"It is Uncle Leolin who is exasperated," returned the child in her old-wise fashion; and, in truth, she sometimes made comments that seemed wonderful. "But, you know, as my Cousin Rupert is the

young lord, he must be so, in spite of Uncle Leolin. Rupert's mother is to be the new lady, too, and mamma says she likes her better than Lady Anna. I like her too, and I let her kiss me : and I like Rupert."

Mrs. Wylde felt very much tempted to give *her* opinion of the young lord, and especially of his mother, but the young lady's presence prevented that. She tilted her bonnet and fanned her red face violently.

Households were organised at the abbey. Mrs. Pomeroy retained her own rooms ; Leolin and his wife retained theirs ; the Lady of Pomeroy established herself in the south wing. Until, as she had intimated, tidings should reach them of the true lord's death : when she might feel it incumbent upon her to make a change. Anything more absurd than this chivalrous notion of hers, towards Rupert, Leolin thought had never been entertained by mortal woman.

Seated in one of the rooms of the south wing—which wing was being newly renovated—was the Lady of Pomeroy in her gossamer widow's cap ; and with her her sister-in-law, Joan. Tidings of the strange complications which had arisen, in the appearance of this little lad, Rupert, were written by Leolin to his sister Joan, who was then staying on the Continent with Mr. and Mrs. Capel. As soon as she conveniently could, Joan returned to England and came on to the abbey. She was looking older than her years justified : the dreadful death of Guy, the stain upon the name of Pomeroy, which that death and the circumstances conducing to it entailed, had told upon Joan. It was an ever-present trouble which could not be lifted.

Twice, during the years which had intervened, had Joan Pomeroy sojourned at the abbey ; not with Mrs. Pomeroy, but visiting (so to express it) the absent lord ; staying in his apartments, waited on by his servants. Her chief motive, in coming, was to see Guy's child, of whom she was very fond. *This* time, she stayed with Sybilla. Unlike Leolin, she warmly embraced the new changes at once : welcomed Sybilla as a sister ; loved at first sight the little lord, Rupert. For a long while past now, Joan had felt convinced, that whatever might be the mystery attending the disappearance of Sybilla, no disgrace could attach to her.

"But still I maintain that you acted unwisely, Sybilla," she was saying this day, when they were conversing on the past. "I now understand George's motives for secrecy ; it was right to respect them ; but to his own family and to your father he might have declared the truth. As he did not, you ought to have done so—for your own sake."

"When a chance word is dropped, it so easily spreads itself, and it would have put George all wrong with his colonel," replied Sybilla. "Over and over again, during that trying period when I was waiting here to join my husband, have I felt tempted to speak."

Next to deceiving my dear father, the greatest trouble I had to bear was that you could think ill of me."

"You might have made your father an exception and told him of the intended marriage."

Sybilla shook her head. "In his fealty to your family, he might have deemed it his duty to stop it: in his love for me, he might have insisted that I should be married openly, or not at all. George and I talked it over anxiously, and he decided that it would not be prudent to speak. All the arrangements were George's; I fell in with them; but I did beg of him to at least tell you, and he would not."

"You cared for George very much, I suppose?"

A deep blush stole to Sybilla's beautiful face. "No one, save himself, knew how much, or ever will know, Joan. As to George, I believe he had loved me from the time I was a girl of fifteen or sixteen; and his frequent visits here, after he joined the army, were made for my sake. The marriage was not kept an entire secret, Joan: as soon as my father knew of it he insisted upon its being disclosed in confidence to the Lady Abbess and Sister Mildred. Father Andrew went over and told them."

Joan Pomeroy abstractedly stroked her black silk gown: her thoughts were cast back to the past. "They always seemed to take, tacitly, your part at the convent, Sybilla. I remarked that."

"They had known me for a modest maiden, who strove to be good and to do my duty humbly before heaven; and they could not believe, even before they were enlightened, that I should suddenly become unworthy," spoke Sybilla earnestly, but half laughingly and wholly blushing. "Well, it was hard to bear, I say, the world's condemnation; but I would go through it all again for my dear husband's sake."

"I saw Mr. Hildyard as I came through London," Joan was resuming, when Sybilla interrupted her.

"The letter from India, that was lost," she asked eagerly: "has he heard of it?"

"He says he has never seen it or heard of it."

"How can that be?"

"Mr. Hildyard is a thoroughly truthful man, Sybilla."

"Oh, yes; I know that. Only it is strange that letter should have miscarried, when the letter to my father, posted with it, arrived safely."

"You are sure the other was posted?"

"Certain. Moore, George's confidential servant, mine now, posted them himself. Major Barkley was with him at the time."

"Major Barkley? George's great friend—was he not?"

"The greatest friend he had in the world. It was Major Barkley who wrote the letter—which was full of confidential details—to Mr. Hildyard. A short note, penned by George in his dying hour, was also enclosed in it."

"Letters do get lost unaccountably sometimes," observed Joan. "It was an unfortunate thing in this instance, on account of Leolin."

"Very, very unfortunate," murmured Sybilla. "His feeling towards me is not a kind one. And he has never seen my father since my return."

"He will get over that," said Joan calmly. "Disappointments of that nature require time to soften them. But, Sybilla, speaking of your father—what is it I hear about his sickness?"

Close upon the arrival of Sybilla as Lady of Pomeroy, John Gaunt was taken seriously ill. He had been ailing for some time previously, but had not paid much attention to it. Upon getting worse, he sent for Mr. Norris. The doctor stood aghast at the symptoms displayed: they were most ominous. Since then Gaunt had been in bed, slowly dying. Dr. Bill came every other day from Owlstone, and Sybilla passed much of her time at the lodge.

"Does he fear, himself, that it may terminate fatally?" breathed Joan.

"He knows it, Joan: fear it, I am sure he does not. He said to me yesterday, 'It seems, my dear, as if God had only spared me just to see you return with your little son!' And, when I burst into tears, he bade me remember that our true home was not here, but in that blessed place to which we were all hastening."

"I should like to see him," said Joan gently. "You must let me go with you this afternoon."

But, ere the afternoon had well set in, the abbey was disturbed by a message from the keeper's lodge. Gaunt was dying. It was the doctor who brought it. He first of all apprised the Lady of Pomeroy, and then made his way to Leolin. The latter, lingering in moodiness at one of the front windows, had watched the doctor to the abbey.

"What a strapping pace you came at, Norris!" was his greeting. "Were you walking for a wager?"

"John Gaunt is dying; he will not, I fear, live through the day," was the surgeon's grave answer. "He wishes you to go and see him."

"I will not go," replied Leolin.

In the course of the day Leolin had another appeal—this time from Father Andrew. For once in his life the priest's good-humoured face was more serious than a judge's.

"Don't let Gaunt die, my son, asking for you in vain. He is most anxious to see you. The wishes of the dying should be held sacred. What has Gaunt done to you?"

"What has he not done?" retorted Leolin. "Been in a conspiracy to wrest my lawful inheritance from me."

'That is just your erroneous way of looking at matters. Your brother George's marriage and the birth of this son wrests, as you

term it, the inheritance from you. Gaunt knew nothing of the marriage."

"Surely, Father Andrew, you need not take Gaunt's part to my face?"

"I take the part of common sense. Gaunt's behaviour throughout has been admirable—yes, Leolin, I repeat it, *admirable*. Look how some men, knowing, all these past years, that their daughter was Lady of Pomeroy, would have presumed upon it! But has Gaunt ever presumed? Has he not been modest, retiring, reticent? Never putting himself forward in any shape or form? No, Leolin, Gaunt has never injured you, or sought to do so."

"*I won't see him*," said Leolin. "That's the second denial I have sent him to-day. Let him content himself with his grandson."

"A brave little fellow, the young lord, if they can only get some flesh upon his bones," remarked the priest, opening his snuff-box as he retired and left Leolin to his obstinacy: for "a wilful man must have his way."

But at the twilight hour, when softness unconsciously steals over us, Leolin repented of his obduracy and set out for the lodge. He had already reached the turning to it when he saw the priest come forth.

"Is he worse, father?"

"Only in so far as that he is weaker—and, my son, I am glad to see you here. He will not last out the night: and I am on my way to prepare and bring him the last sacraments."

John Gaunt, soon to be no more, lay on his bed, the dew-drops of coming death already rising on his once noble face—a face sadly worn and weakened now. A lively expression of gratitude, of welcome, illumined it as Leolin entered. The young lord leaned on the bed by his grandfather's side, half in fear, half in curiosity; Sybilla sat at a little distance; Joan was in the next room.

"I could not die without seeing you," began Gaunt, holding out both his hands to clasp Leolin's. "This late estrangement on your part has been very painful to me. I feel that I have not deserved it. No one has been more grieved than I have that the child should put you out—but it lies not in my power, or in anyone's power, to alter it."

Leolin muttered something that was inaudible, and drew away his hand.

"You are the only brother left of the four," spoke Gaunt again, after getting up his breath. "You will protect my daughter and her child—George's child."

"I will not recognise the child as Lord of Pomeroy," deliberately replied Leolin.

"He is the Lord of Pomeroy, whether you recognise him or not," panted Gaunt. "I was not speaking of their rights; they are beyond your power to disturb; I was thinking of kindness. George, Lord of Pomeroy, is dead; by to-morrow I shall be dead; and none



will be near to afford them protection or to whisper a word of comfort, but you."

"The boy would wrest my inheritance from me, usurp that of my children," sullenly repeated Leolin, who in truth thought no man had ever been so wronged as himself. "I tell you openly—for I disdain to work in a corner—that I do not consider my brother George's marriage was proper or legal; and I will do what I can to get it annulled."

Gaunt, struggling with his weakness, and with a feeling of aversion to these sentiments, of almost horror that they should be avowed by any man pretending to be a Christian, and that man one of the Pomeroyes whom he had revered and done his best to serve, lifted his head from the pillow and supported himself on his left elbow. He solemnly raised the other hand in a warning attitude, and spoke in a tone that thrilled through those who listened to him.

"Beware, Leolin Pomeroy. For your own sake, I pray you, beware. You cannot sin deliberately before heaven, and be unvisited for it."

"Let *him* beware," returned Leolin, standing with his arms proudly folded, and glancing at Rupert. "This little usurper."

"One sad judgment has already fallen on your family," breathed Gaunt; "do not you act so as to provoke another. *As you deal by this child, so may you be prosperous in your own children!*—and take heed how you despise the warning of a dying man."

He fell back panting. The Lady of Pomeroy rose to administer some reviving drops; and Leolin Pomeroy, frightfully disturbed, went forth into the night air.

(To be continued.)



## DOWN IN A TIN MINE.

AT 9 a.m. one September morning I knocked at the door of the "Count House," which stands near the main shaft of a tin mine in Cornwall.

On all sides of me were the busy signs of mining industry—the drawing engine, that winds up the raw tinstuff from the depths of the mine; the stamp batteries, which crush the ore to a fine, almost impalpable mud; the buddles, on which this mud is again and again sorted by the action of water till nothing but pure tinstuff, worth about £90 a ton, remains; and the huge pumping engine setting in motion some 250 tons of material at every stroke of the great piston.

On the threshold of the office I was met by my excellent friend Captain R., who grasped me warmly by the hand, welcomed me to Wheal—, and asked me whether I felt inclined for a dive underground. I assured him that I had come with the express object of seeing the mine under his guidance. We agreed to waste no time, and in ten minutes I was arrayed in miner's costume of thick flannel; my feet were cased in heavy nailed boots; on my head I placed a close-fitting linen cap, and over that a hard-crowned hat, on which a tallow candle was stuck by means of a large lump of clay. A spare candle hanging from a button on the breast of my coat completed my attire.

As we walked towards the main shaft, and I was just considering the effect I should produce were I to stroll into one of the fashionable London clubs in my present costume, we were joined by a miner going to his work.

After a few commonplaces he turned to me and said: "Yes, sir! it's about two years since I was walking to this very shaft—just as I may be walking with you, sir—along with as fine a young fellow as you ever saw. We parted at surface—he went down the shaft, I went to work further west. That poor fellow, sir, never came up alive—we suppose he went and mixed himself up with the pump gear somehow. Leastwise a leg of him was found at the '45' and the rest of his body at the shaft bottom."

To anyone who loves light and cleanliness there is something peculiarly depressing in descending a mine. Your solitary dip serves but to make the darkness visible. The firm grip you are obliged to take of the iron spokes of the ladder makes the dirt only too tangible, while there is something undignified too in descending backwards you know not whither.

For some time I went down step by step in a slow and methodical fashion, gazing helplessly between the staves of the ladder, and

wondering whether we were getting near New Zealand. After a while, however, I felt a longing desire to try and take a hurried glance downwards to gaze into the darkness below me, and to see how my legs were getting on. I did so. The consequence of this rash act was that my candle fell from its perch on my hat, and disappeared into the darkness below, coming down with a dull thud on to the next stage or "sollar."

When we reached that solar I soon perceived that the glory of my candle had departed—clay and tallow were mixed together in one confused mash, in which with the greatest difficulty I discovered a small portion of the wick, which after much coaxing consented to light. Resolving, however, not to be beaten, I battered the mass on my hat and declared myself ready to continue the descent.

The only thing which was calculated to make me nervous during the descent of the next two or three ladders was that the pump rod was working up and down within about three inches of my right shoulder, creaking and groaning at each stroke in the most melancholy fashion. Vivid pictures of "getting mixed up with the pump gear" arose before my troubled mind, and I imagined the grief I should feel at parting with one of my legs at the "45."

"Keep your body well over to the left," sang out Captain R. from about ten feet below me.

"All right," I gasped. I had, however, forestalled the advice, and was almost dislocating my left shoulder against the hard dirty rock, in my efforts to get as far as possible from the great square pump rod which was moving with such pitiless regularity at my side.

All my attention being thus occupied, my legs suddenly began, as I thought (to use a nautical phrase), to go off on a new tack. I dared not again look down, and trusted to Providence to find them again. I soon discovered, to my relief, that the unpleasant effect was produced by a sudden change in the position of the ladder from an inclination of about seventy degrees to perpendicularity. My body, therefore, soon rejoined my legs, and I found myself on another landing stage.

"Now then, sir," said my friend, "this is the '110;' there are some capital stopes to the west of where we are, which I should like you to see. But let me first look to your candle."

I felt truly grateful for this piece of attention. During the last quarter of an hour my wretched dip had ceased to do anything but sputter and smell without giving any light. In skilful hands, however, it was soon resuscitated, and we walked off along a narrow gallery or level, about seven feet high, and well boxed in with timber. This I learnt was one hundred and ten fathoms "below adit," or about one hundred and thirty-five below the surface. A stream of dirty water ran along the bottom between two iron rails for the tram-waggons, on which the ore is carried from the place where it is broken to the shaft.

Captain R. walked on through the dirty water as naturally as if he had been treading on a Turkey carpet (or perhaps more so). I followed in admiring silence, and had just got my boots comfortably wet through, when my friend, taking hold of a rusty iron chain, said, "Now then, sir, follow me," and, half hanging by the chain, half supporting himself on any projecting pieces of rock which might afford foothold, dived down into a dismal cavern, at the bottom of which a solitary candle flickered and flared. I was to follow! I mentally bade adieu to the bright world I had been rash enough to leave, and taking hold of the dirty old rusted chain, swung helplessly from side to side for a while, and at length, in answer to "Now then, sir, drop," found myself in about four inches of mud.

This melancholy spot was, I was told, an underhand stope let "on tribute"—that is, the men received so much (in this case about four shillings) out of every pound's-worth of ore sold.

Two men were working here. They formed part of a "pare" of six, each couple of whom work for a shift of eight hours. One of these fellows was holding and slowly turning a steel boring rod, on which his mate delivered well-aimed blows with a heavy hammer.

On seeing us the men stopped work, and observing that I was a stranger, one of them, a tall strong man, whose thick breathing and husky voice told a tale of hard labour in close foul air, plucked off his linen cap, and commenced scrubbing away at my boots, telling me that most men meant by that operation that they expected the stranger to pay his footing, but that *he* only did it to show his pleasure at seeing a gentleman in his pitch. I was quite touched by this mark of respect, and promptly handed over to the good fellow a coin, which I had been careful to slip into my pocket before I left the world.

"Now, sir, look here," cried Captain R., "there's splendid work." As he said this he waved his candle backwards and forwards in front of the ground in which the men were boring.

"It is indeed wonderful. I replied, enthusiastically, gazing at what was to all appearances a particularly dirty piece of rock.

My friend, however, enlightened my ignorance, by pointing out thin brown resinous-looking strings running through the rock, which he told me were tin stone, from which the bright shining block-tin of commerce is obtained. The presence of these made the rock, in Cornish phrase, good work.

The men now improvised a seat for me, consisting of the handle of a heavy hammer, which, though rather hard and sharp, was very acceptable.

"Well, sir, you never had a piece of climbing like coming down that chain before, I expect!" said Captain R.

"Well, not exactly like that perhaps," I said, "but on a mountain in Switzerland, the Matterhorn, where an iron chain has lately been

put up, there is something similar. There, however, when I was on the mountain a few months ago, the rocks were glazed with a thin coating of ice, my gloves froze to the iron chain the moment I grasped it, while below me a snow slope led gently to a precipice some thousands of feet deep."

I then described the ascent of a steep wall of ice on the Col du Géant, which had to be effected by climbing up the shoulders of a herculean porter, and then being pulled at the end of a rope over a steep little piece of snow slope like a bale of goods. In fact, I laughed at calling the descent by the chain that hung above us climbing at all; but, in truth, all the while I was in a state of nervous trepidation, wondering if I should ever get up into that dirty level again. I managed it, however, and in five minutes my friend and I again stood in the dirty water of the "110."

"Now I think we'll get away to the '130' by this winze," said my good conductor, after a few minutes' breathing space, as he opened a trap-door and proceeded to squeeze some fourteen stone through a hole about a foot and a half square.

"Lead, and I follow," I answered meekly.

Down, down we went, the rickety old ladder creaking with our weight.

"Hullo!" I cried, as I suddenly found one of my legs feeling vaguely about in empty space. "Hullo! where's the ladder gone?"

"Put your foot further west," bawled Captain R. from below.

"Oh yes, further west," I replied, this observation conveying about as much to my mind as it would to a kangaroo of ordinary intelligence. After a minute of anxiety, during which time my leg was waving gracefully about, I called out with seeming indifference, "By the way, which leg?" At this moment, however, I solved the question myself by bringing my left leg with considerable force in contact with the missing ladder, which was some little distance to the left of the one I was on. Descending this, I joined my friend at the "130."

"Be careful here, sir," he observed; "there are about fifteen fathoms of 'bottoms' excavated below us;" and at once walked off along a narrow board, black darkness yawning below him. When he had passed, he kindly turned and threw the dim light of his candle on the narrow bridge, while I, with a curious sinking sensation near that part of my body which a waistcoat ought to have covered, crept slowly and steadily over.

We had only advanced a few fathoms further, and I was just congratulating myself on having passed over those "bottoms" in safety, and determining not to trust myself again to that board, if I had to live the rest of my days in the "130 W," when our lights were both extinguished, and a noise, as if a dozen "Woolwich infants" were being fired off at once, seemed to stun me.

"What's that?" I cried. "Has the mine blown up?" My first

impulse being to drown myself in the three inches of mud which lay in the bottom of the level.

"That, sir, is the effect of dynamite," said the Captain, who seemed to treat the affair as a matter of course. "The men have just blasted a hole in the end. We shan't be able to go in there now, as the place will be full of smoke. I think we had better avoid it by going down this winze."

Accordingly we dived through another trap-door, in shutting which I completely finished off my candle, and then proceeded by a series of ladders almost to the bottom of the mine. Here some splendid tinstuff was being worked on tut-work, by which system the men receive so many pounds (in this case as much as £20, as the ground was very hard and the air close) for every fathom they drive. The miners were working bare to the waist, and well they might: the heat was terrific, a thermometer stood at 96 deg. Fahr. Whenever I *think* of that spot I nearly faint. One old miner here, however, told me that it was "what he called warm," but that he once worked in a *hot* place. This was in the United Mines; cold water had to be continually poured over the men as they worked, and not unfrequently one of their number was taken with a dead faint, and had to be carried to the nearest tank. I mentally resolved not to visit the United Mines.

After staying here about ten minutes, we prepared to start upwards, Captain R. proposing to visit *en route* some of the workings of the "old men," as the miners of days gone by are termed. One great feature of these workings was a place where a huge irregular deposit of tin-stone had been worked away for more than twenty fathoms in height.

We were erelong standing and endeavouring to pierce the smoke and darkness which filled this gloomy cavern, I in front, and Captain R. some few feet behind me. Suddenly a drop of water falling from above extinguished my candle (a new one which had only been put out about ten times before). Immediately a weird phantom figure stood before us in the thick gloom of the huge excavation. Raising my arm, I pointed this out to my companion. He was astonished; I will not say frightened. The figure stood motionless with outstretched arm. Captain R. advanced towards me; the figure grew, and seemed to approach us, till it filled the whole excavation. My friend, with no very steady hand, lit my candle; at once the phantom vanished, as if by the wave of a magician's wand. The explanation of the appearance of this ghost, as of most ghosts, was of course simple. The phantom was nothing more than my shadow projected on the thick smoky air by my friend's candle. I explained this to the good Captain, but he shook his head doubtfully, and evidently thought that, whatever the reason or the cause might be, "the old men's workings were uncanny places."

We now made our way to the shaft by one of the old men's levels



—a narrow gallery about four feet high—along which I had to shuffle in a doubled-up posture, like an S suffering from indigestion. Here and there a thick beam of timber was thrown across the top to “keep the ground abroad.” I had the satisfaction of knocking myself down into about a foot of slushy mud by running my head against one of these pieces of timber—had I not been protected by my miner’s hat I should probably have had the additional pleasure of knocking out my own brains. As it was we reached the main shaft again in safety, and Captain R. here expressed his sorrow at having nothing more to show me. I manifested great grief, and felt extreme joy. All that now remained was to crawl to surface.

I had not particularly enjoyed the descent by perpendicular ladders. I positively disliked the ascent. And yet in nearly all our Cornish mines the miners have to struggle to surface up such ladders, after a hard day’s work. The pull on a man’s strength to climb by ladder some hundred or hundred and fifty fathoms is enormous. In some of our deepest mines, however, man-engines to take the men to and from their work have been introduced.

We had, however, to trust to our own strength to land us at surface, and when, wet and dirty, we set foot above ground, one of us at least was heartily glad to see once more the light of day.



## SPRING.

Hush, listen a moment ! I hear her,  
The sound of her footsteps sweet ;  
'Tis only the patter of raindrops,  
With a tincture of scorn you repeat ;  
But I, ah, I know much better—  
'Tis the sound of my lady's feet.

I caught the gleam of her garments,  
Purple and gold in a glow ;  
'Twas only the leaves of a crocus,  
You say, peeping up thro' the snow ;  
But I have a finer fancy—  
'Twas the dress of my lady, I know.

I felt her breath on my forehead,  
Her voice in the glade I heard ;  
What is it you mutter of flowers,  
And the twit of some tiny bird ?  
My lady is coming—yes, coming,  
And I will not believe one word !

A. E. G.

## SNATCHED FROM THE BRINK.

**T**IME—five o'clock on a sultry September afternoon ; the air is close and oppressive, the sky covered with clouds that threaten storm. Scene—the pleasant shady flower-scented drawing-room of a pretty old-fashioned house in a suburban road just outside the town of Leamington.

The room has two occupants, one of whom—the middle-aged lady presiding at a dainty little “five o'clock tea” table—is the present writer, Miss Catherine Dane. The tall, dark-eyed girl in white, who stands at the open lawn window, is my niece Sidney, the motherless child of my brother Colonel Dane, now in India, but shortly expected home on sick leave.

“Don't you want any tea, Sidney?”

Sidney is in a brown study, and I have to ask the question twice before she comes to the surface with a start.

“Tea? oh, is it ready?” she answers absently, and moving from the window, subsides into a chair near the table. “I was looking for the postman. He is late this afternoon.”

“Do you expect a letter from India by the mail that is just in?”

“Yes, I daresay papa will write.”

“We shall have him with us before Christmas, I suppose?”

“I suppose so,” she assented.

Her tone was certainly not one of joyful anticipation, and the words were followed by a suppressed sigh. It pained but did not surprise me to hear it, for I had discovered long ago that Sidney dreaded her father's return, though for what reason I could not even conjecture. The girl was almost as much a stranger to me now as she had been six months before, when first I received her beneath my roof. My brother had written to me requesting me to take charge of her till he returned to England, as her health required immediate change of climate. I readily consented, but soon found it was no light responsibility I had accepted; I had neither power nor influence over the haughty, headstrong girl, who knew no law but her own will, who accepted homage as a right, and repelled sympathy as an impertinence. In spite of her faults, however, I had learned to love my niece, and her waywardness and caprice only served to add compassion to my affection: for some instinct told me that they were but the outward signs of a deeper ill, a heart oppressed by some hidden trouble, and a nature at war with itself.

What could the trouble be? Anxiously I asked myself the question as, after hearing that significant sigh, I watched her clouded face. But the beautiful face kept her secret and told me nothing.

A sound of carriage-wheels approaching swiftly along the road

caused Sidney to desist from her idle occupation of breaking a biscuit into fragments, and look towards the window. The next moment there swept into sight a pony carriage-and-pair containing three ladies, two young, and one (who was driving) very youthfully dressed—and a gentleman, a handsome soldierly looking man of thirty, with bold dark eyes, and a sweeping tawny moustache. The ladies, catching sight of Sidney, kissed their hands to her effusively, and the gentleman raised his hat, as the carriage dashed by and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Were those the Lightwoods?" I inquired, as she turned from the window, her cheeks flushed, her eyes unusually bright.

"Yes, they have been to the flower-show. Mrs. Lightwood has a rival exhibition in her bonnet. Did you notice it?"

"Her brother, Captain Forrester, is staying with them still, I see."

Sidney only nodded in reply as she handed me her cup to be replenished.

"How long are they likely to remain at Leamington?" I asked.

"I don't know I'm sure. Mrs. Lightwood took a house for three months, I believe; they have been here more than two already."

"Did you know them very intimately in India?"

"Well, yes, I used to visit them very often when they were living at Madras. The widow, Mrs. Lightwood, has always professed a great affection for me, though I fancy she——But that reminds me, Aunt Catherine," she broke off, leaving the first sentence unfinished; "they are going to have a little dance to-night, and they have invited me."

"Again!" I exclaimed. "Do you know that you have been there no fewer than six times during the last fortnight?"

"What an accurate reckoning you have kept!" she returned laughingly. "Well, to-night will be the seventh time, for I am going——with your permission of course."

The last clause was so evidently *pro formâ* that it would have been almost more gracious to have omitted it altogether.

"I wish Mrs. Lightwood would not keep up her 'little dances' to such a late, or rather, early hour," I replied; "and I am sure, Sidney, that so much waltzing is not good for you, with your weak heart."

"Particularly when my partner is Captain Forrester," she added, looking at me with a half smile. "You had better be candid, Aunt Catherine; you know it is not the dance, but the partner you object to."

"I object to both; the partner chiefly, perhaps."

"I wonder why?" drawled Sidney, lazily examining her fan.

I was provoked into answering plainly.

"Because he is a bold, unprincipled, dangerous man. That is why, Sidney."

She flushed, and seemed about to make an angry reply; but,

thinking better of it, answered coldly, after a pause: "I daresay he is very much like other men: neither better nor worse."

"I should be sorry to think my circle of acquaintance included many men of his stamp," I observed.

"Oh! I am sure it does not," she returned, with a little laugh; "you may be quite easy on that score, Aunt Catherine."

"And I should be still more sorry," I went on, ignoring her remark, "if I thought that he could ever be more to you than a mere acquaintance. Heaven help you, Sidney, if you bestowed your heart on such a man!"

She shut her fan, and looked up with a sudden change of expression.

"Bestow my heart!" she echoed, in a tone half angry, half scornful. "You talk as if hearts were 'bestowed,' like prizes, as a reward for merit; as if love were a thing to be given or withheld, subject to the approval of parents or guardians. It does not occur to you that a woman's heart may be won in spite of her?—that she may love against her will, against her judgment, against her duty——"

She stopped abruptly, and the colour rushed over her face.

"What rubbish we are talking!" she concluded with a shrug, as she rose and returned to her old post at the window. A few minutes afterwards the front gate closed behind the postman, who advanced up the winding drive towards the house. Somewhat to my surprise—for she had her full share of Anglo-Indian laziness—Sidney gave herself the trouble to go and meet him, took a letter from his hand, and returned slowly across the lawn, a tall, elegant figure, in trailing summer draperies, with a yellow rose in her dark hair.

"A letter for you, Aunt Cathie," she said, "with the Southampton post-mark. It—why—good heavens!——"

The words died on her lips; she stood looking blankly at the letter in her hand.

"What is it?" I asked. "What is the matter?"

"It is papa's handwriting!" she answered, in a whisper of amazement.

"And the Southampton post-mark!" I exclaimed, and hastily tore it open, Sidney looking over my shoulder as I read.

"Radley's Hotel, Southampton, September 6th.

"MY DEAR CATHERINE—You will see, from the heading of this, that I am already in England. I landed from the *Cheetah* last night, and I should have been with you to-day (Tuesday); but my old wound in the shoulder has broken out afresh, and will keep me prisoner here, the doctor says, for the next forty-eight hours at least, if not for several days. I have just learned that the Lightwoods are living in Leamington, and that Mrs. L.'s brother, that scamp, Fred Forrester, is with them. Sidney has never mentioned their names in her letters to me; but I have no doubt that, in spite of my express prohibi-

tion, she has renewed the acquaintance which was broken off before she left India. I have now a still stronger reason to object to the intimacy: and I trust to you, Catherine, to see that she does not set foot in their house, or hold any sort of communication with them, till I come. I reserve explanations until I see you. In the meantime, believe me,

"Your affectionate brother,

"FRANCIS DANE."

I folded the letter in silence, and looked at Sidney, who stood motionless, gazing straight before her.

"So for the last three months you have been deceiving both your father and me!" I said in a tone I had never used to her before. "You have concealed from him that these people were here, and from me that he had forbidden the acquaintance. I am disappointed in you, Sidney."

"Most people are when they know me well," she replied, with a faltering attempt at a laugh; and, leaning her elbow on the chimney-piece, she let her forehead fall on her hand. Her back was towards me, but I could see her face in the glass, and there was a look of anxious trouble upon it that smote me with sudden pity.

"My child," I said impulsively, putting my arm about her waist, "why will you not confide in me? You have some secret trouble; let me share it; you would surely find it a relief. Will you not trust me, Sidney?"

She glanced into my face, then looked down. Her lips trembled.

"I do trust you, Aunt Catherine," she answered after a pause.

"But—but I cannot tell you; it is impossible; you would not understand."

Before I could speak again she disengaged herself from my arm, and continued, in her usual tone: "I suppose I may write a note of excuse to Mrs. Lightwood? that does not come under the head of forbidden communications?"

"If you will allow me to read it before it goes."

"Oh, certainly." She seated herself at her desk, and took up the pen, but instead of beginning to write, she sat for full five minutes with her chin propped on her upturned palm, looking out before her with a face of intent and anxious thought.

"It is getting late, my dear," I reminded her at length: "you had better write at once." She started and pushed back her hair.

"Yes, I will do it at once," she said, and dipping the pen in the ink, hastily wrote a few lines, which she handed to me for inspection. I glanced over them and saw that she had excused herself on the plea of a head-ache.

"Have you an envelope?" she asked, as I gave her back the note, "I can't find one." I left the room to fetch my letter-case, which was in the dining-room. When I returned Sidney said hurriedly: "Oh, I am sorry to have troubled you, Aunt Catherine: I found one

after all. There is the note, and she handed it to me sealed and addressed.

"For once the stereotyped excuse is not a fib, for my head does really ache distractingly," she added, passing her hands over her forehead. "I think there is thunder in the air. I will go and lie down for a time: I shall not care for any dinner, so please don't let me be disturbed. If I am better towards seven o'clock I shall go and spend an hour at the 'Cottage.'"

"The Cottage," which was the residence of my cousin, Lady Hillyard, was the next house to mine, and the two gardens communicated by means of a door in an ivy-covered wall.

"Do so, my dear. Lady Hillyard is always glad to see you," I answered.

She paused a moment at the door, turning the knob in her hand: then coming suddenly back to my side she put her hands on my shoulders, and looked into my face with an unwonted softness in her handsome dark eyes.

"Dearest, kindest, best of aunties, forgive your graceless niece," she said, with a tremulous smile; "forgive me, not only for deceiving you, but for all my caprice and ingratitude. Tell me that"—her head drooped on my shoulder—"tell me that you love me a little in spite of it."

"My poor child, can you doubt it?" I exclaimed, much touched, stroking the braids of her glossy dark hair.

She lifted her face and kissed me once—twice, and I felt a tear on my cheek; the next moment she was gone, and I was left to my own meditations.

That they were not altogether pleasant ones may be imagined. The more I reflected on what had passed, and the oftener I read my brother's letter, the more anxious I grew.

He could have but one reason for objecting to her intercourse with the Lightwoods, and when I remembered that she had been in constant communication with them for the past three months, with almost daily opportunities of meeting "that scamp, Fred Forrester," I felt anything but comfortable.

I longed for my brother's arrival, and yet half dreaded it; fearing some outbreak of his fiery temper.

It was not wonderful that I had but little appetite for dinner that day.

My solitary meal was soon over, and I returned to the drawing-room, and tried to occupy myself as usual, but found that I was too restless to settle to anything.

The heat, instead of diminishing, seemed to increase as the evening advanced. There was a curious hush and stillness, like the stillness of dread, in the sultry air, broken only by the distant muttering of thunder, and the frightened twitter of a bird, hiding beneath the leaves from the coming storm.



Night "came down with a rush" (as in the tropics) an hour before its time; at seven o'clock it was dark; so dark that, looking out through the open window as I sat alone in the drawing-room, I could not even trace the outline of the shrubby trees: all was a vague black void.

"Do, for goodness' sake, ma'am, shut the window," cried my old servant, Carter, when she came in with a cup of coffee; "the storm'll be upon us in another minute, and if I'm not mistaken, it'll be the worst we've had this many a year."

The words were hardly out of her mouth, when the outer darkness was suddenly rent by an awful, blinding flash of lightning which literally seemed to set the sky on fire, and, barely a moment after, the thunder crashed close above the roof, so close, that I involuntarily crouched and put my hands to my head.

Carter screamed, and clung to me. "Lor' a' mercy! it's like the day o' judgment!" she panted.

"Shut all the doors and windows," I said hastily. "I will go upstairs to Miss Dane."

"Better leave Miss Sidney to herself, ma'am, if you'll excuse me," Carter replied, in her blunt way. "I went upstairs a minute ago to see if she was frightened, and would like me to sit with her, and she answered very short that she had seen much worse storms than this would be, and didn't want my company."

"Was she lying down?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I spoke to her through the door."

The storm proved indeed the worst we had known for years. The sky was lit up almost incessantly by the red glare of the lightning, though none of the succeeding flashes were so awfully vivid as the first; the thunder pealed as if all heaven's artillery had opened fire on the earth, and the rain came down like a cataract, "sheer, and strong, and loud." In little more than half an hour, however, it had spent its force. The thunder died away in the distance, and the rain abated. I threw the window open again, and admitted a stream of cool, delicious air; then, turning up the lamp, which I had lowered during the storm, I took up my work, and sat down on the sofa.

I had set the door open, so that I could see across the hall, and half way up the stairs, and I kept glancing up from my work in the expectation of seeing Sidney descend, for it was now nearly eight o'clock.

Within and without, the house was profoundly still, and the measured "tick-tack" of the old-fashioned clock on the stairs sounded unnaturally loud in the silence.

I felt lonely and unaccountably depressed, and began to wish impatiently that Sidney would come down and keep me company.

"It is too late now for her to go to Lady Hillyard's," I reflected, as the clock struck eight.

Even as the thought crossed my mind, looking towards the stairs, I saw her descending. She had changed her dress for a darker one, and wore a long black cashmere mantle, the hood of which was drawn over her head. Her face, in its dark frame, looked startlingly white.

She came noiselessly downstairs and across the hall; opposite the drawing-room door she paused, and looked in at me, but did not speak.

"Surely you are not going to the cottage to-night, Sidney?" I exclaimed. She made no reply, but passed on out of sight.

Something in her looks and manner made me uneasy. Suddenly a thought struck me that caused me to start to my feet. "Suppose she was not going to Lady Hillyard's after all? Suppose——" I stayed for no more suppositions, but threw down my work and followed her. She had already quitted the house, leaving the front door partly open.

Going out into the verandah, I saw her walking rapidly down the side-path towards the door in the garden-wall. I called to her, but she kept on without heeding me. However, I felt reassured now that I knew she was really gone to the Cottage, and only wondered anxiously whether she had been so imprudent as to rush out of doors in her thin house-shoes.

The rain had now entirely ceased, and the night was as calm as if no storm had ever troubled it, though the heavy rain-clouds had not yet dispersed, and the moon was climbing her way wearily through their dark masses. The breeze blew fresh and cool, bringing with it the rich moist scent of damp earth and grass. It was all so pleasant that I was tempted to linger a little out of doors. I threw a shawl over my head, and began to pace up and down the verandah.

About half an hour had passed thus, and I was just about to turn indoors when I heard wheels approaching along the road. They stopped at my gate, and presently a hired fly appeared in the drive, and drew up at the door; a tall figure, muffled in travelling wraps, alighted, and the next moment I was in my brother's arms, pouring out ejaculations of surprise and broken words of welcome. After a hasty embrace he released me, paid and dismissed the cabman, then followed me into the drawing-room.

"Where is Sidney?" was his first question, as he glanced round the room.

"She is spending the evening with Lady Hillyard; we did not expect you till to-morrow. I will send and fetch her."

"Wait a moment," he interposed, laying his hand on mine as I was about to ring the bell. "I want to have a little talk with you first. Sit down, Catherine."

He tossed his wraps on to the sofa, and sank into a chair, running his fingers through his hair. "Handsome Dane," as he had been

called, was handsome still, I thought, as I looked at him; but his face was worn and pale, and there was a look of haggard anxiety in his dark eyes.

"Francis, why did you come to-night, you were not fit to travel!" I said, involuntarily. He gave a short sigh.

"That is true enough, but I was in such a fever of anxiety that I could not wait until to-morrow. After what I had heard I felt that Sidney would not be safe till I was at her side. About those Lightwoods," he went on abruptly; "how long have they been in Leamington?"

"They took a house here about three months ago," I replied.

"Three months! And he—that"—he seemed to have a difficulty in pronouncing the name—"that Forrester is with them? And Sidney has been visiting them? Good heavens!" He started up and began to pace about the room.

"How much do you know? what has she told you?" he asked, suddenly.

"She has told me nothing. I only know from your letter that you object to the acquaintance—I conclude because you disapprove of Captain Forrester's attentions."

"Judge whether I have reason to disapprove of them," he returned, coming to a stop opposite me. "The scoundrel is a married man."

For a moment I was too startled to speak.

"Does Sidney know?" I asked. He shook his head.

"He has kept it so secret that his own sister does not know, I believe. I only learnt it myself by chance a month ago. He has been married six years."

"When did Sidney first meet him?"

"About a year back, at his sister's house, in Madras. He was in a regiment of Native Foot, and was over head and ears in debt, thanks to high play and fast living. Everyone knew that he was on the look-out for 'a pretty fool with money,' to retrieve his fortunes—and the fool he selected was my daughter. He must have bewitched the girl, I think, for she has sense enough in other matters. Before I even suspected what was going on, he had induced her to engage herself to him, and had almost succeeded in persuading her into a clandestine marriage, knowing well that I should never give my consent."

"But he was married already!"

"Just so; but as I have told you, very few persons knew of that former marriage, and I presume he intended to purchase the silence of those who did with Sidney's money. He was aware that her mother's fortune was under her own control. Well, on discovering what was going on, I was indignant, as you may think, and I resolved to send Sidney at once to you. I breathed more freely when I knew that the width of the Atlantic lay between her and Forrester. My

security was of short duration, however, for a couple of months afterwards I learned that he had sold out, and gone, with his sister, to England. At first I thought of writing to warn you against him, but on reflection, I resolved to come instead. I got my leave at once, and sailed by the next ship—the *Cheetah*. On board, acting as valet to General Fenwick, was Forrester's old servant, a Frenchman named Delplanque, who had been his 'âme damnée,' for years, and was in all his secrets. Forrester had borrowed money from him, it seemed, not a large sum, but all the poor fellow's savings, and had given him the slip, and gone off with it to England. Out of revenge, Delplanque came to me and told me something that startled me—namely, that his late master was a married man. He had deserted his wife—a Frenchwoman—long before, and she was living with her own people. Delplanque had himself witnessed the marriage, but had agreed to hold his tongue 'for a consideration.' He added that 'M. le Capitaine' had boasted he should outwit me, and introduce my daughter to me on my return as Mrs. Forrester. Imagine if you can what I felt on hearing that, and how my anxiety was increased when I accidentally learned at Southampton that the Lightwoods were living in Leamington. Well, thank heaven I have arrived in time. And now, Kate, send for Sidney—or stay," he added, rising, "let us go and fetch her."

I threw on my shawl again, and we went out into the quiet night.

"Oh, the sweet English air!" exclaimed my brother, lifting his forehead to the breeze. "How it takes me back into the long past, when we were all together in the dear old home. I had looked forward to having one like it some day, Kate."

"And so you will have, I hope, Frank."

"Who knows? I have learnt the folly of making plans for the future."

We passed through the gate in the wall, and crossed the lawn and garden of the Cottage, where the flowers were pouring out their fragrance into the night.

The servant who answered our summons at the bell, and who was too well trained to betray any surprise at our untimely visit, ushered us at once into the room where Lady Hillyard was sitting, her favourite little sanctum on the ground floor, looking out on the garden.

A shaded lamp stood on the table, which cast a circle of soft but brilliant light on the books and papers, leaving in half obscurity the silvered hair and delicate high-bred features of the mistress of the house, who was writing. One glance round the room showed me that she was alone.

She looked up as we entered, rose, and after peering doubtfully for a moment at my companion, came forward to him with both hands outstretched.

"Francis, my dear cousin, welcome home!"

He took her hands, but his reply was uttered mechanically, and as his eyes wandered round the room I saw in them the same mis-giving that had just struck chill to my own heart.

"Where is Sidney?" he asked, hoarsely. She withdrew her hands, and looked in surprise from his face to mine.

"I do not know," she answered; "she is not here; I have not seen her to-day."

"Lucy, Lucy," I cried, hardly knowing in my agitation what I said; "she *must* be here—she came here; I saw her go—"

"My dear," she answered gently, "Sidney is not here, she has not been here to-night. Compose yourself, and tell me what has happened."

"She said she should spend the evening with you. I saw her pass through the garden-door at about eight o'clock, and she has not returned."

"Is the gate of your drive locked?" demanded Francis, turning to my cousin.

"No, not yet."

"That explains it: she came into your garden by one entrance, and left it by the other," he said, in a tone so unnaturally calm that I looked at him in wonder.

His face was white to the lips, and there was an expression upon the features that made them seem unfamiliar to me.

"Lucy," he continued, "you have a carriage, I think? will you have it brought round at once, without a moment's delay?"

She glanced at him uneasily, but immediately assented, and left the room to give the order.

He stood, with folded arms, looking down. I touched his shoulder.

"Frank, if we find them, you—you will not be harsh with Sidney?—promise me," I pleaded. "Poor child! her fault brings its own punishment."

He looked at me gravely.

"I will not be harsh with Sidney, I promise you," he replied, "but I have a reckoning to settle elsewhere." He walked away from me to the hearth, and said not another word.

In ten minutes the carriage was ready. I sent a message to Carter that we should probably return late, and that she was to sit up for us herself; then my brother gave the coachman Mrs. Lightwood's address, and we were soon whirling rapidly towards the town.

A quarter of an hour afterwards we drew up at the Lightwoods' door.

The "little dance" had already commenced; the rooms were brilliantly lighted, and when we were admitted, the widow, in an elaborate demi-toilette of "feuille-morte" silk and amber lace, was just sweeping across the hall, followed by her eldest daughter,

Carrie. She was a tall, showy-looking woman of forty or thereabouts, with fine teeth, a made-up complexion, and a false smile.

Expecting to see another of her guests, she was coming forward to greet us with some stereotyped phrase of welcome, when, seeing who it was, she stopped short, her bland expression changing with ludicrous abruptness, to one of very genuine consternation. Recovering herself, however, she extended her hand to my brother, saying sweetly as she ushered us into a sitting-room: "Colonel Dane in England! what a delightful surprise, and how good of you to drop in upon us directly you arrived. You have brought Sidney, I hope. Where is she?"

"Where is she?" he repeated sternly; "that is the question I am come to ask you." She drew back a step, her false smile fading, and, like myself, my brother evidently read in her conscious face the confirmation of his worst fears.

"It is as I thought," he muttered: "they are gone," and his head drooped upon his breast.

"They? who do you mean?" she questioned, hardily.

"Oh, Mrs. Lightwood," I exclaimed, "you know well that Francis means my niece, Sidney, and your brother."

"What—they have eloped? is it possible?" she said coolly; "but pray, Miss Dane, why should you take it for granted that I knew it? I assure you it is news to me. I am not in my brother's secrets."

"Not in all of them, I believe," interposed Francis; "you did not know, for instance, that he had been a married man for the last six years."

The change in her face was something to remember.

"Married!" she gasped. "Fred married! Nonsense, I don't believe it."

He took from his pocket-book, and handed to her, a folded paper, the copy of the marriage certificate. She glanced over it, then sank into a chair, her cheeks blanched to the colour of the paper.

"Colonel Dane," she faltered, in a changed voice, "I solemnly swear that I was ignorant of this. Fred took care not to let me know it. And to think that I have helped and encouraged him to—— good heavens!"

The blood rushed over her face, dyeing it crimson to the temples, and she broke off abruptly, biting her lip.

"Undo, if you can, the mischief your help and encouragement has brought about, and tell me where I shall find my daughter," he returned.

"I will tell you all I know. In the note I received from Sidney this afternoon there was an enclosure for Fred—just a few hurried lines, telling him that you, Colonel Dane, were in England, and would be at Leamington to-morrow, and that she had made up her mind, at last, to consent to a runaway marriage. He was to take the next train to Birmingham, and wait for her at the station there; she would



follow by the one that leaves here at half-past eight, and they could go on to London by the express."

Francis glanced at his watch—a quarter to nine.

"Too late!" he muttered, with a sound like a groan; "they are on their way to London by this time, and once there—but I will follow them; if there is no train I will have a 'special.'"

And without bestowing another word or glance on Mrs. Lightwood, he left the house. When we reached the station, we found it silent and deserted. A porter who was lounging against the door of the booking-office informed us, in answer to our inquiries respecting the Birmingham trains, that the last "regular" had gone at 8.30, but that a "'scursion" would pass through in half an hour and we could go on by that if we chose. It seemed to our impatience much more than half an hour before the lamps of the excursion train gleamed in the distance. Every compartment was crammed with noisy "Black country" folks, and it was with some difficulty that we found seats in a second-class carriage—first-class there was none.

"It is odd," my companion whispered, bending towards me across the carriage; "when I took the tickets just now I made some inquiries of the clerk, and he declared most positively that no young lady answering to Sidney's description booked to Birmingham by the last train. Is it possible that Mrs. Lightwood has deceived us?"

I did not know what to think; it was all dark to me; dark as the wide vague scene through which we were rushing.

As I sat, looking out into the gloom, Sidney's face as I had seen it last, pale and grave and calm, rose before me with strange vividness, and would not be dismissed.

We did not exchange another word till, on emerging from a long tunnel, we found ourselves suddenly in the light and noise and bustle of the Birmingham station.

"Stay here while I make inquiries," Francis said, as the train slackened speed, and glided down the platform. "If they have—What do you say?" he broke off, as I caught his arm with a sudden exclamation.

"Francis, look! there is Captain Forrester!"

He stood alone, on the edge of the platform; his valise in his hand, his travelling rug over his arm, looking eagerly into every carriage as it passed. My brother did not wait for the train to stop before he leaped out, and as the other came hurrying up, still searching the carriages with a look of disappointment and perplexity, they met each other face to face. I saw Forrester start and recoil, but I saw no more then, for the train bore me on past them several yards.

When I alighted it was some moments before I could find them in the crowd. At length I saw them standing under a lamp, the light of which fell full upon their faces—my brother's white and stern, Forrester's excited and perplexed.

"But I assure you, Colonel Dane, that I have told you the truth,"

the latter was saying as I approached. "Your daughter is not with me, nor do I know where she is. She appointed to come by the 8.30 train; as she did not I concluded she had been prevented, and I waited, hoping she would arrive by this one."

"You had a note from her this evening; show it me," said Francis abruptly, after a pause.

"It will confirm what I have told you," the other returned, as he produced and handed to him a half sheet of paper covered with hastily scrawled lines, which I read over my brother's shoulder.

"Papa is in England, and will be at Leamington to-morrow. He is more than ever determined to part us, it seems. I have made up my mind at last to consent to what you proposed—a clandestine marriage. Take the next train to Birmingham; I will follow by the one that leaves here at 8.30. We can go on to London, or where you will; I trust the rest to you. I gave you my heart long ago; now I place my honour in your hands. Yours ever,

"SIDNEY."

"God knows I would not have betrayed her," said Forrester, who had watched our faces as we read. "Before noon to-morrow she would have been my wife, and ——"

"Who would have been the witness to *this* marriage?" questioned my brother, looking him full in the face. "Delplanque's successor?"

He started, and reddened to the roots of his hair, more, as it seemed, with the sudden surprise than any other emotion.

"Delplanque is an infernal traitor," he muttered, looking down.

"Like master like man," was the bitter retort.

"But if Sidney is not with you, where can she be?" I exclaimed anxiously; "she is not at home."

A vague dread of I knew not what was beginning to creep over me.

"Francis, let us go back at once; ask when the next train leaves," I urged.

"Allow me to ascertain for you," said Forrester. He hurried away, and returned in a few moments with the information that the next train was the midnight express. After a slight hesitation, he turned to Francis and added: "I shall hold myself at your disposition, Colonel Dane, for the next week, should you require satisfaction. That is my London address." He handed my brother a card, which the latter tore in two, and threw away without glancing at it.

"Gentlemen do not fight now, and if they did, no *gentleman* would fight *you*," he replied, with an emphasis which brought the blood to Forrester's cheeks. "If you had succeeded in your villainous scheme, I would have given you a villain's chastisement; as it is, I only require you to keep out of my path for the future. Come, Kate," and, drawing my hand through his arm, he moved away.

The tender, luminous rose-colour of dawn was creeping over the eastern sky when we reached home once more.

In the pale, mysterious twilight, the house, with its closed shutters and drawn blinds, had a ghostly look—a look that made me shudder, reminding me of death. The door was opened by Carter.

“Where is Miss Sidney? has she returned?” was my hurried question.

“Miss Sidney, ma’am? I thought she was with you; no, she has not returned.”

My brother and I looked at each other blankly.

“Perhaps she has left a letter,” I suggested; “let us go upstairs and look.” I led the way to her bedroom. At the door I paused, and obeying an instinct I have never been able to account for, motioned to him to wait, and let me go in first. I entered, but had hardly crossed the threshold when I drew back, with an inarticulate cry. The window was wide open, admitting the chill air and cold grey light of dawn; a small writing-table stood near it, on which still burnt a shaded lamp, and there, with her back to me, sat—Sidney. She was dressed as I had seen her the night before; her hat and a small travelling-valise lay on a chair near her. Her letter-case was open before her, and she appeared to have fallen asleep in the act of writing, for her cheek rested on a half-finished letter, and the pen was still in her fingers. All this I saw at a glance as I stood on the threshold; a dreadful fear clutched at my heart, and seemed to turn me to stone.

“Sidney!”

There was no answer. I hurried to her side. The hand I touched was marble cold; on the fair face I turned to the light was the deep mysterious calm which is never seen on the features of the living. She was dead. Hours before, God’s messenger had come for her, in fire from heaven, and without a moment’s pain, a moment’s warning, she had been snatched out of life into eternity; snatched from the brink of ruin, from dishonour worse than death, from long heart-break and bitter shame and misery. Even to us who loved her, it was not difficult to say “Heaven’s will be done.”

The unfinished letter was to her father, a few tear-stained lines, entreating his forgiveness for the step she was about to take. We ascertained to a moment the time of her death, for the works of her watch had been stopped by the fatal flash, and the hands pointed to half-past seven. And now occurs the question which has haunted me ever since. If Sidney died at half-past seven, who, or rather, *what* was the figure bearing her likeness which I beheld at eight o’clock? I leave the answer to my reader.

MARY E. PENN.

## THE ORKNEY AND SHETLAND ISLANDS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND."

THE climate of Shetland is of very even temperature. Snow and frost are not often seen there, and never continue. For this reason the Shetlanders are not skaters. The apparently strange fact of an even temperature in so northern a latitude is due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. For this reason, consumption and that class of disease is not common in the islands. Many persons, indeed, suffering from weak chests and throats, from bronchitis, etc., may go up here and find the health and strength that is denied them in England or Scotland. The most prevalent complaint is rheumatism. There is perhaps not much more rain in Shetland than in many other places, but the amount of evaporation renders the climate damp and moist ; so that few of the inhabitants it is said, reach the age of eighteen or twenty but their enemy, rheumatism, finds them out.

Another malady is dyspepsia, or indigestion, which the natives not inaptly term "rheumatism of the stomach." This is very general, and is in a great measure due to the immense quantity of tea they drink, and their mode of making it. They take it often five or six times a day. The tea is put into a saucepan or kettle, and placed on the fire : there it remains until the decoction is bitter with strength, and it is then considered fit for use. This in time does its work.

Nevertheless, the Shetlanders are a long-lived race : and with the above exceptions know few of the ills to which flesh is heir. This is due to various causes. The even temperature of the islands : a frugal mode of living, possessing the bare necessities, but none of the luxuries of life : a pure, bracing climate : and, above all, occupations that keep them always in the open air.

It certainly cannot be due to the internal arrangements of their homes. As a rule each family lives in one room : a room small and often dirty ; the latter for two reasons : the natural taste or tendency of the lady of the family, her husband and promising flock, and the use of peat fuel. The smoke too often escapes by every outlet other than the one expressly made for it : proving that obstinacy is not confined to the animal kingdom alone. Everything it touches, peat smoke blackens ; it is a law that you cannot touch pitch and not be defiled : and however delicious the aroma—and it is nothing less—may seem to a stranger as he passes the window of a hut or cabin in the open country, he would probably find his love for the scent wax cold after spending an hour or two in one of the close, crowded, peat-smoked chambers of some of the houses that adorn Lerwick.

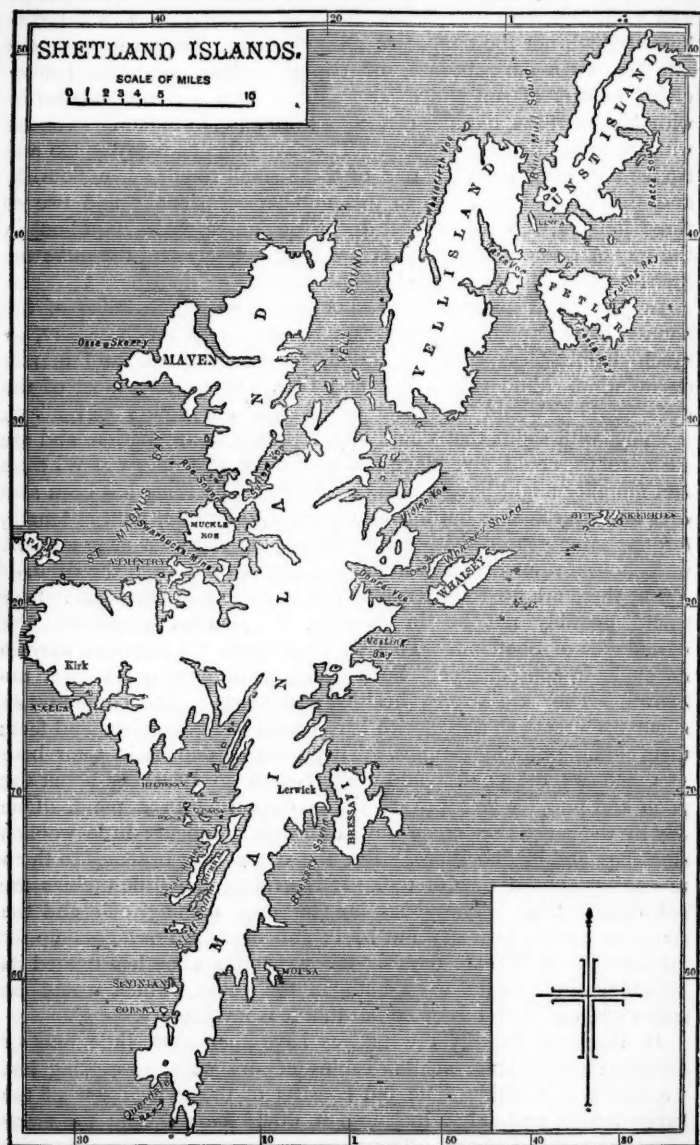
The smiling countenances of the good folk cannot escape the universal tinge, and tone, which clings to the air with all the prevalence though not the danger of an infection. They will rush out into the air a dark bronze, or copper colour, from the health-giving powers of sun and exposure, their faces picturesquely varied with dusky streaks, like the surface of heated tar, from familiar contact with the peat-dried atmosphere. They live often as many as ten and twelve and even more in one of these small rooms: live, flourish, and thrive: and they will to this number occasionally add two or three lodgers who may chance to be not unreasonably fastidious in the way of accommodation. It has been vulgarly said the more the merrier: and, it may be added—the warmer.

In the great metropolis of London, this overcrowding of the haunts of the poor is given as a reason for so much misery, so much helplessness in doing good, so much moral and mental degradation. And this is just and true. Many, nay, most of the evils existing, would disappear for ever, if our courts and alleys, teeming with sights that would be a reproach to any nation, and are a sin to us, could give place to a new order of things where health and morality might have a chance for life. The thing has been said over and over again: but it must continue to be said, until at length, for the same reason that continual dropping will wear away a stone, we behold a resurrection of moral and physical life from the dead.

But there are no such terrible evils to correct in Shetland: there would possibly not be in London, if London possessed the advantages of Shetland. There, if their rooms are crowded, they do not suffer in consequence. Such a thing as immorality is almost unknown. They are strong, healthy, and hardy. The children run about the streets, as a rule, with bare heads, and naked legs and feet; their clothing of the scantiest. They seem to delight in their bare legs, and on the coldest and wettest days go splashing about the pools and puddles as happy as ducks disporting in a pond. One day in the seven they come out in all their grandeur: little woollen stockings and clumsy shoes. But the day of rest becomes to them in consequence a day of toil. It is evident the little urchins are not comfortable. The shoes are for ever coming off: and the stockings are for ever down at heel; and many a howl goes up for the freedom of the six days as the unfamiliar shoe has treated its miserable little owner to a bath in the gutter, which would be rather pleasant than otherwise but that it is involuntary.

In the open country the natives have their own little huts or cottages: small, long, shallow cabins of dry walls, possessing just "a but and a ben." The but consists of the living-room of the happy family, and only a look into it would be sufficient for many people with fine feelings. The pigs are allowed to come into the but, and the hens and the dogs, and the sheep, and any other animals that may be transformed into domestic pets and blessings. The peat

smoke colours the interior to the most melancholy of hues. It is



capricious in its humours, and rather prefers the door to its natural mode of exit, the holes in the roof. Many of the huts have no



chimney, and the fire is made on the hard clay floor in the middle of the but.

The ben is kept in a more select manner. It is the sleeping-room of the father and mother, and is partitioned off. It is also the state apartment, in which company is received and entertained, and it has pretensions to a chair and a table. The rest of the family shake themselves down at night in the but, each choosing the position that seems most suggestive of comfort to his peculiar idiosyncrasy: none the less happy, perhaps, for a general suspicion of dirt and draught. The buts are of this one storey only, heavily thatched. Sometimes, when sunk a little below the road, they look all roof, like a man whose body unduly preponderates over his legs. You must be careful to stoop in entering the doorway, or you might possibly leave your head outside on the thatch: a decidedly misplaced object of beauty and adornment.

The inhabitants of these little cabins are not poor. They live frugally and have more than enough for their wants. At certain seasons the men go out to the *haaf*, or deep sea fishing. The Shetlanders are nearly all fishermen: little other occupation is open to them. If they dislike that, they must emigrate, and go out into the world. Many do so; and, to the credit of the race, have risen to positions of wealth and responsibility, some to fame. The natives consider themselves Norwegians: anything rather than Scotchmen.

The deep sea fishing commences in May and ends in August. Besides this they take voyages: cod-fishing in the Farøe Islands and Iceland: and the Greenland boats come down to Shetland for their crews, and then go whaling and sealing in the Greenland seas and Davis Straits. The sealing expedition is a cruel traffic that ought to be sternly put an end to. They leave Lerwick in March and reach the sealing grounds in about ten days. The men land on the ice and stun the young seals, who do not attempt to move, but look up into their faces with a pitiful, helpless expression, as though asking them to have mercy. But there is no mercy. Before they are dead their skins are taken off, and the men return home in due time well paid for their labour.

Most of these men, thus occupied at sea, when at home live in their little buts and bens, and pass their time in making and mending nets, and in other useful work. Besides their fishing, on the commons or scatholds everywhere around the men have certain tracts or portions given to them, on which they have the privilege of keeping such cattle as they may be lucky enough to possess: cows, ponies, sheep, or other animals. Thus, very comfortably, they manage to make both ends meet.

Whilst the men mend their nets, the women knit garments of Shetland wool. The sheep are much cultivated, and the excellence of the Shetland wool is proverbial. How much it owes to the skill of the women is perhaps not a mystery. The young girls, especially,

give their spare time to the work, and marvellous are some of their productions: rivalling in beauty, but happily not in price, the manufactures of Belgium and India. The shopkeepers pay many of the girls in kind, who thus frequently make up for the bare-legged period of their lives by coming out in all the colours of the rainbow. It is not the only time they make "figures" of themselves. On the 4th of January—old Christmas morning—they dress and disguise, these youths and maidens, and parade about the streets. At one o'clock the next morning the young men turn out, and drag tar barrels through the town, with noise and riot, and a blowing of horns. I saw the same tar barrel ceremony performed on a smaller scale, and at less ghostly hours, on the 24th of June, in the Scilly Islands. The effect of these lighted tar barrels, in the dark night, going through the streets of Lerwick may perhaps be imagined. I would rather imagine than realise it.

It has been remarked that the Shetlanders are a long-lived race. The greater number live to be eighty. They generally die of no other complaint than old age. Amongst the men, especially, a youthful appearance is often kept to the last. A man of fifty will frequently be taken by a stranger for fifteen or twenty years less, and at eighty will think himself juvenile and brisk enough to go out to the Greenland seas. People, it is said, retain the same youthful appearance in the climate of Australia, where men do not lose their teeth, become bald or grey headed—a paradise of patriarchs. If this be true, would it not be almost worth while emigrating, at the age of fifty or sixty, and so secure a second youth, for which so many have sighed and sought in vain? A species of *été de St. Michel* in the winter of life.

There are many important islands in the Orkney group, but the mainland of Shetland possesses the greater part of the attention attaching to its own archipelago. It is of considerable extent, being fifty-five miles from north to south: long and narrow. Interests are consequently somewhat more divided; and though everybody more or less knows everybody else, there is a good deal of breathing-room, of freedom and expanse in their mutual relations. Amongst the business people you find a fund of energy and industry, coupled to an amount of independence and radicalism of spirit, which makes them somewhat unpleasantly abrupt. From the small demands upon their purses for luxury and display, many become possessed of considerable fortunes. It is a modern instance that fortunes are saved, not made. In Shetland the result is perhaps a combination of both chances. The builders of the fortunes make no change in their mode of life: a neglect of duty for which their heirs probably make full atonement. Many of them have a strict eye to economy, as witness the following incident.

Some little time ago a worthy woman was taken seriously ill. She lived in a little cottage down on the shore, where the sea for ever surged and swayed in front of her window. The eternal

lesson chanted by the ocean ought to have given her a certain grandeur of mind. Perhaps it did. Her good man was a fisherman, to which craft he joined the less noble occupation of a cobbler. This worthy couple lived fifteen miles from a doctor; and when the good wife was taken ill, they hoped she would recover without the expensive luxury of a leech who lived at so great a distance. Gradually, however, she got worse, and at length the husband in doubtful tones suggested that it might become necessary to go to Lerwick for the doctor. The good wife sternly objected. It would cost a mint of money; four pounds; far too much to be spending on physic. They would wait and see. They waited and saw, until one fine morning the good woman breathed her last. And then they had to do for the dead woman what they would not do for the living—summon the doctor and pay him the four pounds, to certify of what she had died.

This is no mere story, but a fact: proving that the Shetlanders are frugally inclined, and look twice at their money before parting with it. But this wise and frugal turn of mind is not altogether confined to the poor of Shetland, as the accompanying anecdote, a fact equally true and authentic, will serve to testify.

A man in humble life, but well to do, and very respectable, whom we will call Mackenzie, owed a sum of money to a rich "laird," one of the wealthiest men in the whole of Shetland. When the day arrived for paying the debt, Mackenzie called upon the laird, found him at home, and was ushered upstairs into his sanctum. The laird expressed much satisfaction at seeing his tenant—his errand was a pleasant one. He had walked far and must be weary. The laird regretted he had no whisky and water to offer him. Whisky, just now, was dear—and water in an island, is probably often scarce. Yes, there was the bill. Twenty pounds ten shillings, and one farthing. All quite correct. Neither addition nor deduction at fault. Mackenzie put down twenty pounds and ten shillings.

"And one farthing," said the wealthy laird emphatically, looking up at Mackenzie.

The latter had not a farthing in his possession, and inwardly smiling put down a halfpenny. The laird looked at the halfpenny, fumbled in all his pockets, searched his secretaire, dived into his money bag—but no farthing was forthcoming. It was very annoying. Mackenzie naturally did not care about the change, yet, determined to see how far the rich laird would go, he held his peace. The laird rang the bell, and a servant appeared.

"Thomas, go round with my compliments to Mr. Brown, and ask him to oblige me with the change of two farthings for a halfpenny."

Thomas took the outstretched halfpenny, departed, and in about five minutes returned with the obligation—the requisite two farthings. During this time Mackenzie had been kept standing. The laird gravely took the coins.

"Here, Mr. Mackenzie, is your change, and here's your receipt," said he, handing over one of the farthings, and carefully depositing the other in a wash-leather bag.

Mackenzie returned his thanks, pocketed the coin, wished the laird a good-day, and departed, his ideas of human nature scarcely exalted by the interview.

If all the Shetlanders were of this economical turn of mind, it would not be a wonder that some of them grow rich. Happily, however, they are not so for the most part. They are much given to kindness and hospitality. One of the chief gentlemen in the islands told me that some years ago, if he caught sight of strangers anywhere near his house, he invariably went out and brought them in, entertained them, and sent them on their way rejoicing. Things are different now : visitors and tourists are matters of every day occurrence, and to entertain all passers-by would be a serious interruption to the quiet of home. There are also inns and public places of rest about the island : unknown institutions at the time alluded to.

I saw very few of the Shetland ponies in Shetland. The Shetlanders call all their ponies horses, and would be much wounded in their dignity if anyone gave them the more diminutive title. In Orkney, on the other hand, all the horses are called ponies. The ponies in many parts of Shetland run wild upon great tracts of the commons or scatholds. One might almost fancy them without owners, and get up a miniature hunt as in the prairies of America. They are stunted probably for the same reason that vegetation is stunted : but they grow wonderfully strong, and do good work for their owners. As with most things, the price of these ponies has increased, whilst the breed is deteriorating.

With the very best of these ponies it is a formidable thing to pay a morning call in Shetland. Amongst the inhabitants a call is generally supposed to last about a week. One morning I started upon a drive of fifteen miles to visit some friends. The roughness and inequality of the road, now up hill and now down, made the fifteen miles almost as long and arduous as thirty. Here, as in Orkney, all vehicles are "machines." This particular machine was a species of dog-cart, wisely patronized in the country on account of its lightness. My jehu, an intelligent youth, was of somewhat tender years to have the care of one's life committed to his charge.

Not having as yet been into the interior in that direction it was new ground to explore. It proved a long, monotonous, yet enjoyable drive. During the whole of that fifteen miles we met scarcely a human being. Occasionally a few scattered cottages and cabins came into view, which Jamie, the youthful driver, distinguished and dignified by names possessing more letters than the hamlets counted houses : and he would point out here a school and there a church that looked smaller than its adjoining manse, yet larger than the needs of any possible congregation. "Where do they come from?" I

asked, feeling a natural and proper sympathy for a minister who all the days of his life had the depressing work of ministering to bare walls. "Where do the people come from, Jamie, Sunday after Sunday?"

"Oh, sir, just round and about," replied the intelligent Jamie, describing an area with the sweep of his arm that took in the sky and the horizon. "Over the hills and far away yonder. You'd be surprised to see the great number of them coming to church of a sabbath."

I felt that I should be very much surprised. It was really like taking a drive in an unknown country. Hills round and about us gloomy and melancholy, yet grand in their way, and possessing that peculiar charm of solitude and solitariness that appeals to the fancy and elevates the mind. With every turn of the road the hills changed form and undulation, but were never otherwise than sombre and lonely, wild and barren, with few traces of vegetation. Here and there a flock of sheep were browsing, but more frequently our progress was arrested by large flocks of geese, straggling over the road, or cropping the grass, or looking like snow-white patches on the distant heather. Like the ponies in other parts, the geese seemed to run wild and possess the land, unowned by mortal. Yet the different flocks, as Jamie declared with heroic admiration, never mix together, and unpleasant juxtaposition sometimes ends in a pitched battle: feathers fly, and there is much cackling, until the victorious side goes off in triumph to shake the remnant of its ruffled plumage into order.

Now and again, at unexpected turns of the road, sometimes in long vistas and sometimes near at hand, we caught glimpses of the sea, shimmering in the sunshine, and rising with the breeze that was rising also. And at intervals I noticed small boxes without lock or other security than a little loose wooden door, fastened to the dry stone walls that in Shetland do duty for hedges. "What can these be for, Jamie?" I asked, after puzzling in vain for a *raison d'être*.

"Oh, just wayside post offices, sir," replied Jamie. "The people write their letters, put them in these boxes, and the postman goes by once or twice a week and takes them away."

"Do you mean that letters are left there night and day, with no lock to secure them?"

"Oh ay!" returned Jamie. "What should ail them?"

"Are they never lost or stolen?"

"Stolen?" cried Jamie, in wrath bigger than his body. "Stolen, sir! There never was known such a thing as a thief in Shetland—never since the islands were created."

I envied Jamie's faith—or the privilege of living amongst so honest a people. Yet I believe he was right in the main, and that Shetlander and honesty are terms synonymous. In Lerwick, for instance, there is one policeman. He walks about with a military looking

stick, a sort of wand of office, which he flourishes with as much dignity as a mace bearer in my Lord Mayor's procession, or a parish beadle assisting at a beating of the boundaries—a gold lace round his cap, and a formidable looking coat with tails and brass buttons. He calls himself a superintendent or inspector, and his business is to superintend and inspect himself, and patrol Lerwick to the terror of the little bare-legged boys and girls: but it is not in the memory of the oldest inhabitant that he ever had other and less pleasant duty to perform. And we know that in Shetland they live to a great age. A man at a hundred is quite a juvenile and one man put out to sea at 140. I do not know whether he ever returned; probably not; but may still be seen sailing about the ocean, the phantom captain of a phantom ship.

And whilst we are on the subject of officials, I may as well further interrupt the thread of my drive, to state that the only other official of any importance I ever heard of in Lerwick is the town crier. I never had the privilege of seeing this gentleman, but I have no doubt the same practice is in vogue here that prevails in Orkney. There for the moderate sum of sixpence, the crier goes through the town with a brass bell, and delivers his message with such breathless rapidity, that only by following him about and taking up the tale at the point it was last lost, can you in any way gather whether he wishes to announce that a particular house is in flames, or that Mrs. Macbride has been safely delivered of the long expected twins.

But if anyone will go to the extravagance of a shilling, then the crier comes out with a big drum, the largest drum I ever saw, which made the greatest uproar I ever heard, equal to the drums of a hundred circuses rolled into one. With this he halts at every turn and fires away at the drum as if he had a special spite against the instrument—as very probably he has: and all the people rush out in wild excitement, hair erect, and mouths open to hear the important news. The drum also presses so heavily upon the crier that his speed of utterance is brought down to something like moderation, and you may gain the information without joining the mob that never fails to attend a big drum in its progress.

After a drive of fully three hours we reached our destination: a wild but picturesque spot: the sea was again round and about us, and near upon us. Across the water was the little island of Mousa, a green spot now uninhabited and used only as grazing land: conspicuous as containing the ruin of the burgh or castle. In front of us rose the large white house of Sand Lodge, by far the most attractive building I had yet seen in Shetland. It seemed almost like a return to civilization, and soon it proved to be so in reality: a greeting with old fashioned warmth and hospitality combined with refinement: a day that rendered my visit one of the pleasantest recollections of Shetland. Beyond the house—a strange sight in Shetland—were furnaces and pit-



shafts, and tall chimneys sending forth black smoke: all the signs and tokens of ironworks. No very disagreeable token as yet: the works have only recently been taken up by a company: but if eventually successful, this portion of the mainland will possess all the vestiges of a black country in miniature.

Unfortunately it was impossible to cross the water and inspect the burgh of Mousa. The wind had risen considerably, the water was rough and turbulent. But a long walk over the very edge of the cliffs, showed up the bold rock scenery, around which the sea for ever dashes itself in vainless fury: whilst the fresh strong breeze blew over the land and swayed here and there a rough field of bere; one of the few visible signs of cultivation. Stretching out to sea was Sumburgh Head, high and bold, and terminating the rocky coast.

I had heard much of the moonlight nights in Shetland, and rather rejoiced in the idea that a nearly full moon would light us on our road homewards. We started about eight o'clock. It was now blowing half a gale. The sun had neared the horizon in full splendour, casting magnificent tints about the sky that almost assumed the character of an aurora borealis. The moon was large and nearly round: as twilight gathered, her pale light increased to intense brilliancy: partially hid now and again behind these thin streaks of crimson, that appeared only to change the tints of her brightness and not conceal them.

Darkness at length fell upon us, and the pony, though homeward bound, was less brisk than he had been in the morning. The moon threw great shadows over the hills, as now and then a dark cloud flying along eclipsed her light. The hills themselves were steeped in gloom, and looked twice as large as they had looked in the daylight, weird and ghostly. Nor was our progress always smooth sailing. Every now and then a squall would come up; a heavy black cloud that enveloped the heavens with a pall and plunged us into intense darkness. The wind rushed up the valleys between the hills, and over the tops, and almost sent us backwards; the rain came down with the force of hail. This would last for about five minutes. The cloud would then sweep away, and the moon once more bathe the landscape in such silvery light as proved beyond doubt the claims of Shetland to the glory of her moonlight nights.

As we progressed, Jamie the youthful began to have fears for his safety, or had a wish to arouse mine. Here was a precipice. It was an awful place. It was too dark to see, but the pony could easily fall over unless he kept a tight hand upon him. Then there was a great hole in the road; he didn't know exactly where, but we should have to look very carefully for the hole, or it would be all up with the pony.

"But there was no hole in coming," I remonstrated. "How could there be a hole now, and you know anything about it?"

"Oh, sir, you're just mistaken. The hole was there, but you

were cloud-gazing when we passed it, or it might be hill-gazing, and so didn't see it; but it's there, and it's an awful hole. 'Tis a shame the road-menders don't do their work better."

Thus, according to Jamie, if there were not robbers in Shetland, there were at least people who occasionally failed in their duty. It was some consolation to an erring mortal that he was not living amongst a perfectly immaculate race.

The stars were so bright that I endeavoured to interest Jamie in the first elements of astronomy. For a few moments his attention was puzzled and profound. Then he came back to earth abruptly. "Oh ay! it was all very well to be stargazing; but the hole, sir—the hole in the road. Whilst we were stargazing upwards, the hole might be letting us downwards, and then where should we be?"

It was impossible to resist this argument. By-and-by a small hole



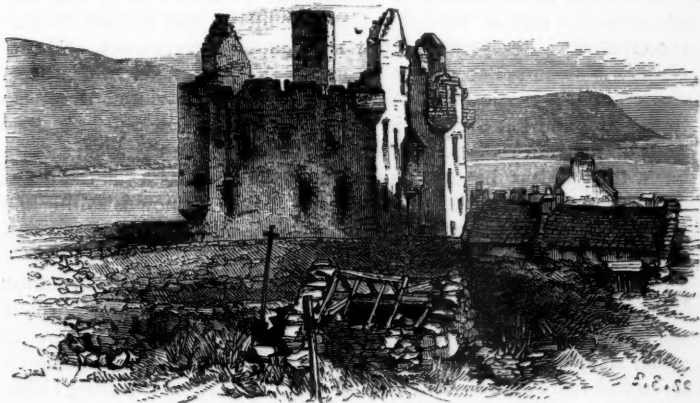
SCALLOWAY, SHETLAND.

was really discovered; and Jamie testified his relief by straightway falling asleep, where possibly his mind went back to the stars. So we went on, until I began to think we had had enough of our drive, when, close upon midnight, we clattered into Lerwick, down the long, straggling street. Every door was closed, every window dark, every inhabitant, no doubt, long in his first slumber. I pitied Jamie. He was of too tender years to be out driving at midnight; and I recommended him to his father's compassion the next time I met that smiling but hard-hearted parent.

The house, as we stopped at the outer entrance, was shrouded in the universal darkness and silence. In front, the water looked cold and gloomy, and the various small boats at anchor upon its restless surface were tossing and plashing up and down. The outline of the opposite shore of Bressay could faintly be discerned, reposing amidst the silence and stillness of death. My landlady, making sure I should not return that night, had fastened the door and gone to

bed. She hastily answered the summons; bolts were slowly withdrawn, and a timid voice asked if I would be good enough to wait before entering. I suppose I was too impatient, for I obtained a vision of a long white ghost disappearing behind a door with more haste than a dignified ghost ought to have used so far off cockcrow. Then Jamie drove off, and re-awoke the echoes of the little town, and no doubt was soon slumbering in his small bed, dreaming of stars, and holes and precipices that required a tight hand over the pony.

On a subsequent occasion we drove over to Scalloway, a distance of six miles, and a slight record is necessary on account of the importance of the place. A part of the road lay through the peat district—the black country of Shetland, as the natives call it, though happily the blackness does not extend itself to the atmosphere. The road was diversified, if not enlivened, by the peat-women old and young



SCALLOWAY CASTLE, SHETLAND.

returning homewards, their kishies upon their backs piled with fuel. The aspect of the country was much as that already described, except that it was perhaps a little more grand and open, showing up in greater extent. The peat-fields were black and sombre, and the men and women were leaving off work—earlier than usual, perhaps, because it was Saturday afternoon: though I know not whether the half-holiday movement has yet obtained influence in Shetland.

Scalloway was originally the capital of Shetland, if it does not still consider itself so: but all trade and importance has left it for the more happily situated Lerwick. Yet the situation of Scalloway is perhaps the most beautiful in all Shetland. The long sound, stretching far away down to the sea; the holms and skerries scattered about the water, the broken undulations of the coast, with its innumerable little bays or voes; the bold and beautiful headland, in the distance, of the Fitful Head, which gives its name to Norna, and looks even from here majestic enough to be worthy of the honour. It was not

far from Scalloway that the old Udaller, Magnus Troil, was supposed to live, with his fair daughters Minna and Brenda, who divide between them the heart and admiration of the readers of "The Pirate."

The village lies partly on rising ground, and possesses more beach than I had yet seen in Shetland. Small, white sand, up which the water, of the utmost transparency, quietly and lazily rippled in the sunshine. Innumerable gulls perched upon the water, and whirled around with wild clang at sight of an unfriendly gun. Upon the beach, women were hard at work, taking piles of cod out of tubs, which they scrubbed upon boards with hard brushes, with a might worthy of Spartan women. Both to smell and sight it was not a very pleasant occupation : but the cod in due season would be thought excellent food by those to whose lot it might fall.

Hard by, prominently and picturesquely situated on a tongue of land, was the ruin of Scalloway Castle, built by Earl Patrick Stewart the cruel, who always went forth in pomp and ceremony, and proclaimed his courses at dinner by means of trumpeters. Scenes sad and cruel has Scalloway Castle witnessed : many a victim drawn up to the roof and left to swing in the air until death released him. The walls of the ruin remain, and prove how strong the castle must have been, though less beautiful than the palace at Kirkwall, and of a different character. The chief trade of Scalloway now is salting and curing fish, which brings a good many boats into its fair waters that would otherwise find no business there.

As we left Scalloway the view from the hill was most beautiful. We were climbing quite a precipitous valley, which the Shetland pony took bravely. Behind and below us lay the village, a picture of quiet, sleepy contentment. The coast stretched far out, opening up more and more as we ascended. The gulls gave us a parting clang, as they flew over the water in wild confusion. But a turn in the road soon shut out the view and much of the brightness from the remainder of the drive.

On our return home, we were met at the door by "peerie Johnnie," as he was called : peerie in Shetland signifying little. Johnnie's father lived next door, and was a fisherman with a large family and three wives : two of whom, it must be added for the sake of the man's reputation, had long slept with their mothers. Peerie Johnnie was the most sturdy young imp of three years old that ever was seen : so sound and solid, broad and solemn, that he was surnamed the Dutchman. His fat little legs passed their days in flying through mud and puddles indiscriminately, and showing a clean pair of heels at the approach of danger.

Johnnie had a brother Charlie who had become very much of a nuisance, and, with the familiarity children often acquire, made his appearance at all times and seasons in our sanctum, with the most unblushing effrontery. So G. one day, with a happy thought, took up his gun and threatened to shoot him. Henceforth no earthly

power would induce Charlie to enter our gates. Johnnie in his turn became somewhat encroaching, but the gun trick applied to Johnnie had no terrors. Upon this, G. one day took out his knife, opened the large blade, sharpened it affectionately, and declared he would cut off Johnnie's head. This was an awful threat to Johnnie, who evidently thought decapitation a much more serious affair than shooting. He showed a rapidly dissolving pair of heels, and henceforth, like Charlie, kept at a respectful distance.

Johnnie was not only Dutchlike in appearance, he was solid in appetite. G. one day treated him to a little of everything upon the dinner table, including a small draught of ale which he thought splendid, and a dose of cough mixture from a bottle on the sideboard, which he thought best of all. He was also Dutchlike in his pugnacious qualities, and when any wish or desire of his mother's happened to thwart his more matured judgment, he would immediately set to and with arms and legs administer a correction with an earnestness worthy of a better cause. Of his father, Johnnie stood in wholesome awe; and of one of his sisters, who at bedtime would come behind him quietly and swoop down upon him like an eagle upon a lamb: only that no lamb ever struggled and kicked and howled in an eagle's claws, as did unhappy Johnnie in the clutches of his sister.

But Johnnie's delight and ambition was to catch sight of one of us going out, and with his fat little legs, and fat husky round voice, beg a penny to buy "gundy"—a compound of treacle and sugar and other ingredients attractive to the youthful mind as the needle to the pole. Gundy was Johnnie's weakness, and any trouble and almost the terrors of the knife would be braved with the chance of a penny at the end. Many a yard he would run behind us, and in plaintive tones appeal for gundy; an appeal not to be resisted. A halfpenny or penny safe in his clutches, arms and legs would go off like the sails of a windmill, and he would literally fly to the gundy shop. In less time than was credible he would reappear upon the scene, no traces left of money or sweetmeat, but a face all smeared with treacle, and eyes with a sheepish look in them that distinctly asked for more. Johnnie, like the horse-leech, was never satisfied.

Poor Johnnie! He was a fine little fellow: our small leaven of humorous humanity amidst a good deal that was sufficiently prosy. No sketch of Lerwick would be complete without him.

"Eh, sirs!" how comes it that I have left the rocks and the seas and the boating to the last? I know not indeed, unless it be that my heart is in it most: for there lies the great attraction of Shetland: there Shetland reigns supreme. In a concluding paper, I must endeavour, in however faint a degree, to do justice to all this wealth of beauty and grandeur: the waters and the rocky coast of this northernmost archipelago.

## THE STORY OF RENÉE OF ANGERS.

**T**HOUGH it occurred so long ago as the time of Henry IV. of France, the story we are about to relate formed one of the most remarkable causes célèbres before the Parliament of Paris, when Renée Corbeau, a young demoiselle of Angers, in Normandy, by her eloquence in a court of justice, and by her singular self-sacrifice, saved the life of a false and dastardly lover, to whom she was devotedly attached.

In the year 1594, when Henry IV., justly surnamed the Great (though his passions betrayed him into errors and involved him in difficulties), was on the throne of France, a young man named M. Pousset, a native of Téés, an old episcopal city of Normandy, was studying the Civil and Canon law at the university of Angers, in those days a famous seat of learning. While thus engaged, M. Pousset was introduced to Mademoiselle Renée Corbeau, the daughter of a citizen. She is described as having been a girl of great beauty of person and with great modesty of manner, though witty and lively in spirit, fatalié et caressante, and full of nameless graces. Everyone loved and admired Renée, and when but a youth Pousset sighed for her. He soon learned to love her passionately, and we are told "that he no longer lived but to see and converse with her."

She in turn became deeply attached to Pousset, who proposed marriage, and gave her, in writing, a document to that effect, though her parents were in circumstances so limited that he dared not consult his own (who were people of wealth, rank, and ambition) on this important subject. So the lovers dreamed on, and on the faith of the written promise, Renée, it would appear, yielded too far, and fell, as her mother Eve fell before her; and then repentance came when too late.

The unfortunate Renée had, in time, to make a confidante of her mother, who in her grief and anger revealed all to M. Corbeau. He heaped the most bitter reproaches on their daughter, but agreed that some plan should be adopted to bring Pousset, who was now studiously absenting himself, to reason and a sense of justice. It was arranged that he and Madame Corbeau should feign a journey to a little country mansion they possessed not far from Angers, and that Renée should press Pousset to visit her, when they should take advantage of the occasion to surprise him; a project which was executed with complete success.

Thrown completely off his guard by this unexpected stratagem, the lover said with much apparent candour:

"Monsieur Corbeau, be not alarmed for the error which our love for each other has led us into; but pardon us, I beseech you. My



intentions are still most honourable, and I shall but be too happy to espouse your daughter."

The incensed Corbeau was somewhat comforted by this prompt promise of reparation, and sent immediately for a notary, his friend, who lived close by. The latter drew up a formal contract of marriage in legal form, and to this, with Renée, M. Pousset appended his signature and seal, after which he took a tender farewell of the weeping girl, and retired with the view of, reluctantly, breaking the matter to his family; but so true is it that "affection is the root of love in woman, and passion is the root of love in man," that from the hour in which he signed the—to him—fatal contract all his regard for Renée evaporated.

Her beauty and her sorrow alike failed to impress him now, and the faithless Pousset repented him so bitterly of what he angrily deemed a legal entanglement that he hastened to Téés and unfolded the whole of the affair to his father in a story artfully coloured and fashioned to suit himself.

M. Pousset the senior, who possessed a magnificent estate, never doubted but that his amiable and facile son had been entrapped by an artful girl and her parents, and sternly told him that he could never approve of his marriage with one whose portion was so small, and desired him to commit her, the contract, and the whole affair to oblivion. While the document, signed and sealed, existed, this, however, proved impossible; so young Pousset, either by his father's advice or his own inclination, took refuge in the bosom of the Church, and was somewhat too speedily ordained sub-deacon, and then deacon, thinking thereby to vitiate the power of the contract, and to create for life an invincible barrier between himself and Renée.

With all the grief and horror a tender and affectionate heart could feel when love is so repaid by black perfidy, she heard these tidings, and her soul seemed to die within her; but her old father, who was filled with just indignation, and whose sword the ordination of Pousset kept in its scabbard, raised a civil action against him before the principal court at Angers for having deluded and then declined to marry his daughter in the face of the notary's contract.

The recreant was compelled to appear; but he appealed against the order, and denied the jurisdiction of the court; hence the cause was brought before the Parliament of Paris. Before this tribunal, then, were brought the wrongs of Renée Corbeau, and the whole affair seemed so cruel and odious to the judges—especially the fact of Pousset having taken holy orders (and thereby degraded them) to evade the contract of marriage—that they condemned him to espouse Renée or *lose his head* by the sword of the executioner.

He urged that the sanctity of holy orders utterly precluded the former reparation. On this the court unanimously declared that he must undergo the latter. He was accordingly replaced in the Bastile; the priest who was to attend in his last moments came to prepare

him for death, and as all sentences were summarily executed in those days, already the headsman awaited him.

The heart of the poor girl, who loved him still, was now wrung with new anguish and pity, and she accused herself of being the cause of his approaching doom. Crushed by that dreadful conviction, in her anxiety to save him, or at least have his sentence mitigated in some manner, she conceived the idea of taking all the guilt of his position upon *herself*.

Hastening to the old Palais de Justice, she entered the great hall, the centre of which was then occupied by the famous marble table which Victor Hugo describes as being of a single piece, so long, and so broad and thick, that it was doubtful if in the world there was such another block of marble. Imploring the astonished judges to hear her, she knelt before them, and while scarcely daring to raise her eyes from the floor, she told them in trembling accents that in condemning her lover-husband, for such she deemed him, they had forgotten that she too was culpable; that by his death she would be sunk into sorrow and covered with ignominy; and that while seeking to avenge her, or repair her honour, they would bring upon her the opprobrium of all France!

The judges listened in bewildered silence, while in a low and still more tremulous voice, Renée continued thus:

"Messieurs—I will no longer conceal my crime. Remorse of conscience now forces me to declare that, thinking you might compel M. Pousset to marry me, I concealed the fact that I snared him into loving me—that I loved him first, and was thus the source of all my own sorrow! You deem it a crime that he took refuge in holy orders to avoid the fulfilment of his contract; yet, messieurs, that was not *his* doing, but resulted from the will of a proud and avaricious father, who is, in that matter, the real criminal. Spare him then, I implore you—spare him to the world, if not to me! He has declared that his orders preclude his marrying me; and for that declaration you ordain that he must die. Oh, what matters his asserting that he would formally espouse me if he could; and because he cannot, you condemn him to die, after giving him a *choice*. Who here can doubt that he would marry me in spite of his deacon's orders? Though I am but a weak and foolish girl, I know that we may yet be wedded, could we but obtain the dispensation of his Holiness Clement VIII. Daily we expect in Paris his Legate, who possesses sovereign powers. At his feet I will solicit that dispensation; and oh, be assured, messieurs, that my love and my prayers will obtain it. Suspend your terrible sentence, then, till he arrives."

After a pause, during which she was overcome with agitation, she spoke again:

"Think of all he has endured since his sentence has been delivered, and of all that I am enduring now! Should I have among you but a few voices for me, ought these not to win me some

favour of humanity over the rest, though they be more in number ; but alas ! should all be inflexible, permit me, in mercy at least, to die with him I love, and by the same weapon."

It is recorded that the unhappy Renée's prayer met with a very favourable reception, and that the remarkable tone of her self-accusation, of having "ensnared" M. Pousset, gave a new colour to his alleged crime. "The judges," we are told, "lost not a word of her oration, which was pronounced with a clear sweet voice, and her words found a ready echo in their hearts, while the wonderful charms of her person, her tears and her eloquence, were too powerful not to melt, if they failed to persuade, men of humanity."

She was requested to withdraw while they consulted, and the First President, M. Villeroy, after collecting their votes, found himself enabled to grant a *respite* for six months, that a dispensation might be obtained if possible ; and on this being announced, the plaudits of assembled thousands made the roof of the Palais de Justice ring in honour of Pousset's best advocate, Renée Corbeau.

Ere long the Roman Legate (Cardinal de Pelleuë) came to Paris ; but, on hearing the ugly story of Pousset, he conceived such indignation against him, for the whole tenor of his conduct, that he constantly turned a deaf ear to every application in his favour. Soon the last month of the respite drew to a close, and the fatal day drew near when Pousset must be brought forth to die !

The unexpected hostility of the Legate cast Renée once more into despair, an emotion all the more terrible that the announcement of M. Villeroy had given her brilliant, perhaps happy, hopes. These, however, did not die. She obtained an audience of Henry IV. soon after he had stormed the town of Dreux and made his public entry into Paris, and, as he was cognisant of her miserable story, on her knees at his feet she once more sought an intercession for her doomed lover, if he could be termed so still.

Henry had too often felt the passion of love not to be moved by the singular beauty of the suppliant, by her sorrow, and the eloquence with which affection endowed her. He raised her from the floor and besought her to take courage, as he would now be her friend and advocate.

The Cardinal de Pelleuë could not decline the prayer of such an intercessor as Henry the Great, and, as the luckless Pousset had not received the higher orders of the priesthood, his Eminence granted a dispensation in the name of Clement VIII. The marriage ceremony was duly performed, in fulfilment of the contract signed at Angers, and Renée Corbeau and the lover she had rescued "lived ever after in the most perfect union ; the husband ever regarding his wife as his guardian angel, who had saved his life and honour."

JAMES GRANT.

## EDNA'S TROUBLES.

IT was a fine old room, and fitted up with all the luxury that wealth could command. Its two occupants, a lovely girl, and an elderly man, noble in form, but dark and stern in face, stood under the full blaze of the great antique lamp swinging above their heads. They were discussing a long-disputed question. Old Mr. Lydell, flaming with passion at the girl's last words, burst out vehemently:

"You are not my slave, forsooth! Nevertheless, my haughty young lady, you are under a heavy debt to me. Tell me what you are—who you are? Tell me that, if you can."

The girl did not answer. She put her hand up to her brow as if a pain were there. He resumed:

"You are called Edna Ivesly Hay; but what do you know of yourself beyond that? Answer me. Have not I been the making of you? Did not I take you from—from—yes, almost from the gutters, and transform you into what you are? You are accomplished. Whose money rendered you so? Whose but mine, ungrateful girl! You are graceful as a fairy. Whose money paid the master that drilled you? Mine again! You are beautiful in your silks, jewels, and dainty laces. Whose money purchases for you those desirable things? Mine, and mine only! And wherefore have I done all this? Did I not take you as my own child, hoping and expecting you would repay me with affection and gratitude? What sort of a recompense is this that you are giving me?"

Edna Hay put up her hands deprecatingly. It was all true. Grateful, deeply grateful to him she was: but she could not repay him in the manner he wished.

"My son," resumed Mr. Lydell, "my only son, whom I idolise, has set his heart upon your baby loveliness, and crowned you with the honour of choosing you for his wife. Think you, then, that I can allow you to bring misery upon this house from your childish whims? If so, think it no longer. If you have not already learned what the sin of ingratitude is, learn it now. My son's will is my law—the love I bear him my only religion! Do you understand? Do you understand that I mean you shall become his wife——"

"I do not like him," she gaspingly interposed.

"With or without your consent, you shall become his wife, simply because it is his will. Theodore loves you—therefore, Theodore's you shall be! To-morrow he comes home. Be wise, and receive him as your future husband!"

There was a dark threat in the old man's eyes, as he concluded, that sent an involuntary shiver through the girl's slender frame.

But a determination equal to his own marked both words and tone as she answered respectfully :

"It is true that I am indebted to you for all that I possess of worldly good, and I am, Heaven knows, truly and deeply grateful. You bade me look upon you as a father, and I have striven, as in Heaven's sight, to give you all a daughter's duty. But, as I said before, I am not your slave. Theodore Lydell I will not, I cannot, marry. Oh, don't you see that he is not a good man?—handsome, gifted though he is, I could not love him."

"Do you wish to be cast out?"

"Cast me out," she answered in agitation. "I would rather die than link my fate with his! Let me go out into the world and battle against the poverty from which you rescued me——"

"Enough!" thundered the old man. "I will listen to no more folly. My son shall have the bride of his choice! And there shall be no delay. Next week—next week, hark you—you shall be his wife. Your wedding-dress is already ordered. Now go."

Striding to the door he flung it wide, adding in deep tones, as Edna passed, shivering, into the hall: "Go! and remember that for the insubordinate there are means to compel submission."

A swift change passed over the girl's face as the door closed behind her, and it was with fleet foot and panting breath that she sped up the stairs and to her chamber.

"What can he mean? What will he do?" she gasped shudderingly, as she dropped into a chair before the blazing fire. "Will they force me to marry him? He is so wilful, so powerful; and Theodore is deep, and unscrupulous as sin. Heaven help me!"

It was a trying position. The girl, left an orphan when little more than an infant, had been taken to by this very distant and rich relative, John Lydell, and brought up as a daughter of his own. Of course she owed him all gratitude for it; she wished to be humble and obedient, and to repay him if she could by loving care: but she *could not* marry his son. She had always disliked the selfish, overbearing Theodore, who was ten years her senior; and she had heard the whispers of the servants about his evil ways. She had said to his father that Theodore was not a good man: she might have gone further into truth and said he was an essentially bad one. No; never, never could she marry *him*.

And there was Malcolm Payne in the way besides—and Edna's blushes came fast as she thought of him. Mr. Lydell was in the habit of calling him that "beggarly secretary," and would not encourage him at his house. Poor he might be, as compared to the riches of the old man; but Edna felt sure he loved her: and only a few days ago, when they had met at a dance, he whispered to her, when holding her to him in the whirling waltz, that his salary was already quite enough for comfort, if she could only think it so, and that it would rise higher year by year. She did not know very much

about this Mr. Payne; and they had not met many times—but it does not take many meetings for love to grow.

Mr. Lydell's threat had terrified her. If he did indeed mean to force her into a marriage with his son, how could she contend against him? Sitting by the fire in her terrible trouble and perplexity, her hands pressed upon her aching brow, the thought came into her mind that there was only one way of saving herself—flight. Edna was young and inexperienced, possessing an inordinate idea of Mr. Lydell's power and of her own unprotected weakness: and it did in truth seem to the girl that she could be saved by flight alone. More than ever did she regret that the home had no mistress to whom she could appeal: Mrs. Lydell had been for some years dead.

"I will do it," she whispered at last to herself in her bitter desperation. "I will run away—and this very night. To-morrow Theodore comes, and it might be too late."

In a commotion of heart that few people have experienced, Edna made her few preparations, hoping to escape when the household should be asleep. It was an early household generally: Mr. Lydell was old enough to feel the need of rest. At ten o'clock Edna heard him come upstairs; and by the very tread of his foot, and the bang he gave his door, she knew how angry he still was with her.

Every night at one o'clock a stage coach, as she knew, passed a distant place called Hart's Corner, on its way to catch the mail train at Braemont. If she could join that coach it would take her to the train, and she might escape all over the world then.

Waiting and trembling, sick and irresolute, for this running away seemed to be a most formidable expedition in Edna's eyes, little short of wicked, it seemed that the minutes never would pass. The more she watched the little clock on the mantelpiece, the slower the hands appeared to move. Should she stay and sacrifice herself?—or should she venture on this daring move? It was perhaps the thought of Malcolm Payne that nerved her to attempt it.

When the clock struck twelve, she put out the lamp; and, taking the small paper parcel in her hand, opened the chamber door softly. Listening, as well as she could for the beating of her heart, she made her way softly across the carpeted landing, down the stairs, and finally out through the glass doors of the breakfast-room.

So far, so good. Walking quickly through the garden, she stood within the outer gate, trembling, under the friendly shadow of the great trees, through which the sharp December wind was sweeping its weird song. For a minute, eye and ear were keenly vigilant: there was no movement, no match struck to warn her that aught had been heard within doors. With renewed hope she passed out to the high road.

It was a very lonely neighbourhood; and Edna trembled as much from that as from other fears as she went rapidly along in the dark night. The moon ought to have been out, but it was not.



The way was longer than she had thought for—or seemed so. Hart's Corner was gained at last, and none too soon. She had barely reached it when the stage turned the curve of the hill before her. The coachman drew up. Two male passengers were inside, apparently asleep. Edna shrank into a corner, and was soon forgotten. A long hour of feverish desire to push forward more rapidly at last ended: she took her ticket for a distant place, haphazard, and was soon whirling rapidly along.

Amidst the rush and thunder of a swifter flight she matured her still somewhat indefinite plans. As a first step towards the accomplishment of these plans she left the train earlier than she had intended; getting out at an insignificant station. It might be safer, she thought, than going on to any large town.

All that day Edna walked; not knowing where to go, what to do. Conscience makes cowards of us, and she feared to be seen. It is, however, needless to follow her through the tortuous journey by which she designed to baffle pursuit. The sun had gone down, indeed, night long set in, when, heart-sick and weary, a gleaming light from a handsome villa tempted her to seek shelter there. In truth, she was physically incapable of proceeding farther. Entering the gate, she crossed the lawn to the house.

But the exhaustive effects of unusual fatigue and excitement told severely upon a somewhat fragile nervous system, and it was with unsteady hand and beating heart that she drew the bell. At its first vibration a deep-mouthed hound came leaping around the wall and barked at her—but did not bite. Nevertheless, Edna was thoroughly frightened; and when the door opened, revealing a tall, raw-boned female of severe aspect, her modicum of strength gave out, and instead of the effective little speech so carefully prepared, she gasped some unintelligible words, and fell fainting into the arms involuntarily extended to receive her.

The arms were muscular ones, and she was hastily borne into a charming little room, in which sat the mistress of the house.

"What is it, Burns?" she asked, without looking from the glancing knitting-needles in her hand.

"I dinna ken, Miss Ruth, unless it be a woman frae the skies that dropped in my arms. It's weil they are stout, for she's heavy-like, though an ilka thing," Burns coolly added, depositing her burden suspiciously on the sofa.

The astonished Miss Ruth sprang to her feet with an alacrity that sent her ball of yarn to the opposite side of the room, and left her work pendant on the corner of the work-table beside her.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" she sighed, leaning over Edna's inanimate form, her helpful fingers actively busy. "Chafe her hands, Burns, while I loosen her cloak. What a beautiful girl she is! Quite a lady, I am sure."

Burns set to work, her tongue keeping time to the operation.

"Now, Miss Ruth, I'm the oldest servitor of this old house of the Neals, and you must list to me. Dinna be running daft. You ken naught o' this face, though it be sweet, and I pray you to be careful. What good did you ever know o' these night trampers? Leddies don't go abroad in this fashion—coming down on decent folk in the dark without word or warning. Dinna forget the puir weak auld woman who sped awa' on a mon's legs wi' a dozen o' the auld Neal spoons i' her gown pocket."

Miss Neal, actively engaged in efforts to restore Edna to consciousness, suffered Burns to run on to this point, which was, in truth, a very sore one.

"Hush!" she at last interposed, "cannot you see that the poor little thing is a lady? I'm ashamed of you, Mary Burns! There's some mystery of course; but I daresay she will explain it."

But Edna, though unable to give sign, had *heard*. Opening her eyes on the tall figure, with its stiff angularities, erect as an old grenadier on duty, behind plump little Miss Ruth Neal, she intuitively comprehended that she was an object of suspicion. The serene kindly face of Miss Ruth was, however, a gift for which she was thankful, and with a few faltering words she attempted to rise.

"Thank you, I am quite well again."

"Not quite," returned Miss Ruth, a low, pleasant laugh rippling over her lips at the ineffectual effort. "Lie still, my dear young lady. Burns shall get you a cup of tea."

"How good you are!" impulsively cried Edna, as the door closed on Burns.

And she caught the slender hand that was bending over her, and drew it to her lips. Miss Ruth's heart had pulsed through fifty odd years; but it was still a very soft one, and Edna slipped at once into its softest niche. It was utterly impossible to look at that taking face, and not believe in it.

The keen-witted Burns, on returning with the tray, quickly perceived the impression made on her mistress: and as promptly commented upon it when again out of hearing.

"The Neals war a' alike," she grumbled in her broadest Scotch—as was generally the case if put out. "Shake them a' thegither i' a bag, an' you'd ne'er ken ane frae anither, unless Miss Ruth might fa' out the simplest o' a'!"

But Miss Ruth, unconscious of Burns's depreciative opinion, answered Edna's regrets, and apologetic remark that her journey would be resumed early the next morning, with a cordiality which would have doubly exasperated the waiting-woman. It must, however, be admitted that Edna—after mentioning as her name the abbreviated one of Miss Ivesly, which being merely a baptismal name nobody had ever heard of—fell into anxious thought. She felt that she was expected to explain whence she came, and a few more personal items—and she could not.

"She is so young," thought Miss Neal. "I fear I ought to press her confidence for her own sake."

It was yet early in the evening when Miss Neal conducted her guest upstairs.

"I hope, my dear," she said, as they exchanged good-nights, "that your rest will not be disturbed. I am in hourly expectation of the arrival of my nephew, who has promised me a visit—and it is somewhat rare I get one from him—so if you hear a stir you will know what it is. And in the morning you will tell us your story: we will advise you for the best."

But this was just what Edna was afraid to do. Faint, despairing, she began to lay plans for quitting this house, as she had quitted her own. Mentally and physically exhausted, Edna lay down on the bed, only taking off her shoes and dress, in the midst of which she heard the arrival below, and presently Miss Neal came upstairs, followed by a manly step.

"I am sorry you think I have done wrong, dear," she was saying. "But, indeed, Burns ought not to call her a 'night tramp.' You are tired, so I'll say no more: but in the morning we will insist upon the young person explaining herself. Good night, my lad; you'll sleep well."

With trembling anxiety Edna waited for an hour or more, and then rose. The words had scared her. Miss Neal seemed to be a very *proper* kind of person, and no doubt she and this stern nephew of hers would deem it right to send her back to Mr. Lydell. At any risk she must escape *that*. Lighted by the decaying fire and a brilliant moon, she made a hasty toilet, and was soon standing without her room, prepared for another flight.

Oppressed by a nervous dread of she hardly knew what, detection being uppermost, Edna paused a moment to listen. But profound silence reigned over the cottage; her boots were in her hand, and she gave no sound as she cautiously groped her way downstairs. Whether she should get away she knew not. That there was a back door to the house she had heard through some colloquy between Burns and her mistress, and she endeavoured to find it. The open door of the kitchen gave forth a glimmering light from the decaying fire, and Edna gained the door and peered closely at it to see its fastenings. Only one heavy bolt.

Her trembling hand was about to push back this bolt when a foot-fall in the kitchen warned her of danger. There was no time to lose; and in a moment she had slipped into a closet just beside her under the stairs, the door of which her anxious eyes, now grown accustomed to the semi-darkness, discovered ajar.

She had barely entered when the footstep came forth; its owner pushed the kitchen door to and made for the stairs. All might have gone well, but for an awkward movement of Edna's. She came in contact with what seemed to be a basket of clothes-pegs, and they came down with a tremendous clatter.

"Them rats again!" ejaculated Burns, irascibly—for she was the night-walker. Back she came to the closet door.

"The door open!" cried she in surprise. "The uncanny things can run in and out. I'll fetch a candle and the poker."

Turning the key in the lock, away went Burns for the poker. Would there be murder committed?

With heart beating to suffocation, Edna prepared for the encounter by drawing the hood of her waterproof more closely about her face. She felt like one in despair.

Very soon Burns returned, bent on the slaughter of the rats. Her hand softly touched the key. It turned; the lock snapped; but ere the door could be moved by the cautious Burns, Edna, hooded and veiled, threw herself against it with all her might, at the same time uttering a low guttural sound in her own great terror, which was followed by her onset. And it all proved too much for Burns. Instantly she lay a discomfited heap upon the floor, candle and bravery alike extinguished.

With swift fingers Edna unfastened the back door and darted out, intensity of dread winging her feet as she fled from the place. As the door swung behind her she paused a moment to put on her boots, and then continued her wild flight with redoubled speed. She was not, however, to escape unobserved.

Miss Neal's nephew, who was no other than Malcolm Payne, aroused from his dreams by the commotion below, sprung from his bed, donned a few articles of clothing, flew downstairs, saw the back door open, and went out in pursuit, leaping over Burns to do it.

Meantime, Burns remained quiescent, a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions. She was not quite sure what the robber had done to her, or whether she was killed or not.

Miss Neal, hovering at the top of the stairs, called down softly and cautiously, "Burns! Burns!"

"Oh, Miss Ruth, run down!" came the appealing answer.

"Where are you? What is the matter?" Miss Neal anxiously inquired.

"The matter! I'm dead, Miss Ruth."

"Dead!"

"Right down dead," groaned Burns. "Here, down in the ha'."

Timorously enough Miss Neal came down. The poker lay along the floor-cloth, the extinguished candle was right under Burns's chin. Miss Neal, suppressing a smile, did what she could to get Burns upright, and inquired particulars.

"My tooth began to ache again, and I came down to get some hot stuff for 't," began Burns, excitedly, "an' was gangin' to bed again, when there came a noise frae the closet there. I said it was the rats; so I locked the door till I could get a candle and the poker. I unlocked the door careful like, when it flew open wi' an awfu' sound, an' struck my poor old head a blow that sent me down there.

Then two robbers tumbled over my feet; two, ma'am: one a minute after the tother; and out o' the house they went, wi' nobody to stop 'em."

Burns's second "robber" was of course Malcolm Payne. In leaping over the threshold he saw something white lying at his feet. Picking it up he found it was a lady's cambric handkerchief.

A peculiar, delicate perfume, of which Edna was especially fond, thrilled through him, and caused him, hurried though he was, to turn to the corners and look keenly at them in the moonlight.

"Edna!" he read, gazing incredulously at the embroidered characters. "It cannot be *my* Edna! and yet—where is she?"

Thrusting the handkerchief into his pocket, he rushed onwards. Edna, swift-footed as a gazelle by daylight, was not so by moonlight and in these strange grounds. Thinking Burns was following her, she sped onwards, uncertain whither. Frantic with excitement and fear she persevered, converting the anguished "Edna! Edna!" ringing hoarsely on the night air, into so many shouts of triumph. And when at last a light hand fell on her shoulder, and she reeled fainting into the friendly arms behind her, she still believed herself vanquished by a foe.

"Poor darling! poor darling! What does it all mean, I wonder," murmured Malcolm Payne, gazing down at the poor little face in the moonlight. "Why, my dear child, don't you know me? your own Malcolm!"

And with a faint cry of relief she lay upon his arm in peace.

"A dozen more. o' the siller spoons gone, ma'am, for I can't set my eyes on 'em naewhere," Burns was announcing as they got back. "If this does na teach us to beware o' night tramps — eh, mercy me, Mr. Malcolm! then what is it a'?"

"It means that this young lady, who has so fortunately taken refuge here, is my promised wife, Burns," answered Malcolm, who had heard a word or two of explanation from Edna as they came in.

Little more remains to be told. With her head pillowed on Miss Neal, and her hand a prisoner in Malcolm's, Edna told her story in detail. And Malcolm told his aunt *his* story—to tell which had been the chief purpose of this visit to his aunt—that he intended to make this young lady his own with all speed.

An attack of fever followed on the excitement Edna had undergone, during which she had not a more gentle attendant than Burns—who had found her spoons were safe. The wedding followed. For her lover represented to Edna, with all the eloquence he was master of, that she could not be safe from John Lydell and his son until she should be placed beyond their power as Mrs. Malcolm Payne.

## ON A CASE OF TROPICAL BIRDS.

HAS the life fled, and does the gold remain—  
 The gold and green,  
 The blue and crimson sheen,  
 The wondrous light, which goes and comes again,  
 On burnished breast  
 And wing, and jewelled crest :  
 The vivid beauty, where no touch of death  
 Has left his mark ; which seems to ask in scorn,  
 Can aught be fairer than these tints of dawn  
 Which glance and glow unwarmed by vital breath ?

Yes, surely, it were fairer yet to see  
 The gay birds free,  
 In tropic grove,  
 And full of life and happy energy ;  
 Spreading their painted wings in joyous flight—  
 Each changing hue more bright  
 Beneath the burning sky ;  
 To see the gleaming throats  
 Active with tuneful notes—  
 Each note a part of some glad song of love.

And now the cheerful hum I seem to hear—  
 The stir of life,  
 The sounds of joy and strife—  
 The voices of my birds I hold so dear ;  
 I see their busy movements, catch the gleam,  
 Reflected in still stream,  
 Of emerald pinion or of ruby breast.  
 I am not in my quiet sitting-room,  
 In twilight gloom ;  
 But in West Indian woods, where, drowsily,  
 Deep waters lie,  
 And the fierce sunshine pierces through the shade  
 High boughs have made ;  
 Where all is rich luxuriance ; and the eye,  
 Tired with the glare  
 Of colouring and light so warm and rare,  
 Closes at last in rest.

The rest is broken. I awake, and see  
 No longer Tropic sunshine, lake, and tree ;  
 But, through the twilight gloom  
 Of my quiet sitting-room,  
 Up to the little table at my side,  
 In all their regal pride,  
 My silent, soul-less birds that know no change—  
 My faithful friends, who still are what they seem,  
 And ever stay with me,  
 Without the wish to range.  
 I smile, and bless their tranquil constancy ;  
 I bless them also for my fairy dream.

EMMA RHODES.



